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ABSTRACT

A set of curriculum papers written mainly by teachers who attended workshops in continuing education is presented. This set contains articles looking toward a freer conception of school writing than the one generally held, and some exemplary assignments. The intent of these papers is to provoke significant curriculum change by changing teacher attitudes. Values of these essays are listed as follows: (1) They give examples of good teaching materials; (2) They show teachers moving on their own in the realm of theory; and (3) They illustrate evidence of the workings of curriculum change. The document is divided into the following sections: Writing: Some General Articles; and Writing: The Classroom Experience. General emphasis is on personal and expressive writing, and on the writing process, especially on classroom conditions that encourage writing. The study establishes the continuity of the composition ethos in U.S. schools: teaching techniques (discovery of errors, practice in skills) and ends (training to meet future social demands and conditions) remain constant in all articles noted. (For related documents, see TE 002 930 and TE 002 937-939.) (Author/CK)

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English and the 70's. Part II. Writings; Part III. Composition in Elementary English

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Papers on writing developed by teachers in various programs at Northwestern Curriculum Study Center, for use in in-service programs. General emphasis is on personal and expressive writing, and on the writing process, especially on classroom conditions that encourage writing. "Composition in Elementary English" is a historical analysis of the attitudes toward and conceptions of composition that were reflected in articles in the journal between 1924 and 1960. The study establishes the continuity of the composition ethos in U.S. schools: teaching techniques (discovery of errors, practice in skills) and ends (training to meet future social demands and conditions) remain constant in all articles noted. The study is intended to serve as contrasting companion piece for Part II. (WWD)

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ENGLISH AND THE 70'S

Wallace W. Douglas

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
The Curriculum Study Center in English
Evanston, Illinois

September 1970

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1A

ENGLISH AND THE 70'S

PART II

Writing: Some General Articles
Writing: The Classroom Experience

The Curriculum Center in English

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
Evanston, Illinois

Wallace W. Douglas
Director

TE 002 936

ENGLISH AND THE 70'S

English and the 70's is the second set of curriculum papers to be issued by the Northwestern Curriculum Study Center. Most of the papers were written by teachers who attended various Curriculum Center workshops in continuing education; a few were written by students in courses. The papers are in four parts. Part I ("Prolegomena for Curriculum Builders") is a collection of general or theoretical essays, in which teachers grapple with the implications of the "English" that has begun to emerge in the last three or four years. Part II ("Writing: Some General Articles" and "Writing: The Classroom Experience") contains articles looking toward a freer conception of school writing than the one still generally held, and some exemplary assignments. The Composition opinionnaire included in this part has produced some interesting indications of teacher beliefs. Part III ("Composition in Elementary English, 1924-1960") is an important historical study of the attitudes toward and conceptions of composition that have been held during the working life of most of us. It is an essential base for anyone studying or reforming the English curriculum. Part IV ("Approaches to English") is a collection of teaching materials, assignments, exercises, accompanied in some cases by reports of use.

And what is the significance, the value of this material? The answer is three-fold.

First. English and the 70's gives examples of good teaching materials. There is much in these materials that will be suggestive to teachers who are interested in strengthening their approach toward the imaginative and the affective.

Second. English and the 70's shows teachers moving on their own in the realm of theory. It shows teachers thinking critically and generally about their work. It shows them acting truly as members of a profession.

Third. English and the 70's is, therefore, illustration and evidence of the principle on which the work of the Northwestern Curriculum Study Center has been based, at least for the last five years.

That principle has been clearly stated again and again, in the Center Newsletter, in articles and speeches by members of the Center staff, and the several reports from the Center. We state it again here so as to make clear both the use and the importance of

English and the 70's.

The locus of significant curriculum change is to be found in prior or at least concomitant changes in teacher behavior and attitudes, especially thsoe with which role-definition is implicated. There must be significant examination of the assumptions controlling the behavior of the individual as teacher and as English teacher.

As Sir Karl Popper has put it,

> We do not learn by observation, or by association, but by trying to solve problems. A problem arises whenever our conjectures or our expectations fail. We try to solve our problems by modifying our conjectures. These new tentative conjectures are our trial balloons--our trial solutions. The solution, the new behavior, the new theory may work; or it may fail. Thus we learn by trial and error; or more precisely, by tentative solutions and by their elimination if they prove erroneous.[1]

The details in Popper's statement of his learning theory can easily be applied to the situation of today's schools and teachers. In a very interesting article, "Visions of the Future Schoolroom,"[2] John C. Flanagan has suggested that in the immediate future the schools will be developing toward "first, a more functional curriculum; second, a truly individualized educational program for each child; and third, a new role for the teacher as an experienced guide, a continuous source of inspiration, and a valued companion in the child's search for self-realization." Great effort on the part of teachers will be required to make any one of these changes; to have to deal with them all requires of teachers a massive expenditure of physical and psychic energy. _English and the 70's_, it is to be hoped, will offer them support, as a heuristic model of a way of achieving change and as some tentative solutions to the problems and needs that confront us all. But both model and solutions should be taken as suggestive only, for it is still a principle that "school curriculum is not a matter for national policy." "Selection of a style of curriculum is the right and responsibility of the local school district only."[3]

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1. Conversations with Philosophers--Sir Karl Popper Talks About Some of His Basic Ideas with Bryan Magee," The Listener, LXXXV, (7 January 1971), 8-12, at p. 9.
2. John Maxwell and Anthony Tovatt, Eds., _On Writing Behavioral Objectives for English_ (Champaign: NCTE, 1970), pp. 61-69, at p. 64.
3. Sue M. Brett, "The Federal View of Behavioral Objectives," Ibid. pp. 43-47, at p. 43.

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WRITING: SOME GENERAL ARTICLES

THE HOPE

for Writing and through Writing

Mildred Laird

You remember those stacks of papers you checked last year--. "The tremendous freight cars are suddenly outlined against the brilliantly orange setting sun," wrote Joe in trying to describe the view from his window--Joe, who tried so hard to please. And your reaction when you read it--pen in hand, awaiting the proper time and place to apply the red ink--was a conflicting one. The sentence was dull--no doubt about it. But he had used some descriptive adjectives. In fact, he had even used a few adverbs--and that was one of the guidelines for good writing that had been discussed yesterday. And upon reading Cathi's paper -- Cathi, the sharp one, whose sparkling eyes revealed her keen perceptiveness -- you noted, "The woman wore her favorite dress into the dining room." How could Cathi be so insensitive? Surely she was seeing reality as something more precise than the blur this sentence reflected. And Rick's paper, penciled, ruffled at the edges, written in a script hardly legible. It was quite evident that Rick didn't like to write -- but he had completed the assignment.

The slowly diminishing pile of unchecked papers loomed before you. Each, in turn, revealing the steady, repetitive pattern of dullness and insensitivity -- the product of your prisoners of procedure. That is, all except Neal's. Neal had written, "Happiness is finding the rest room at the State Fair." You reacted to that expression and then recalled that Neal's parents provided him with the opportunity of having many and varied experiences. Maybe, you reasoned, it was having lots of experiences that sparked interesting writing. If only you could locate a book -- some materials -- an approach that would help you guide these kids toward improving their writing!

* * *

If you have never experienced a situation similar to this; if your students' writing is wholly satisfying to you, you are indeed a unique teacher of English. But if you are one of many English teachers striving to help students develop the ability to create sensitive, accurate writing -- writing that has an extra quality, a quality somewhat elusive, indefinable and intangible, but nonetheless a quite satisfying quality -- the quality that makes writing worth reading; if you are dissatisfied with the results of the method or methods you are now using, or if you are desirous of helping your students toward self realization through the use of his language, then it is time to think anew of the writing process and what the teacher can do to efeect good writing.

That the processes in the development of a writing ability are complex is almost an understatement. That there are still numerous exploratory studies underway which will hopefully add more knowledge to what is known about the writing process should also be noted. But the compounding results of scholarly efforts on the part of individuals particularly interested in the writing process -- (and ultimately in helping man to become more humane through this effort) and the results of research funded through N.D.E.A. have enabled some interesting and helpful results -- (though at this point not wholly conclusive results) to be drawn.

The ability to write sensitively, it is believed, can be developed in suudents. Given the environment and atmosphere for recognizing that he has something to write and a language with which he can express the thought, given the motivation to want to write to the best of his ability, and given some knowledge of a form into which he can shape his thoughts, a student can learn to express his thoughts sensitively and accurately on varied topics. And not to be overlooked is the by-product of this process--a by-product shadowing the product, for the effect that boomerangs upon the individual during this creative process is one of self realization and is an acknowledgement of his world with a greater intensity, with more preciseness and in greater depth than he has viewed it before.

Let's focus upon each of the elements that need to be present in an instructional writing program. First -- given the environment and the atmosphere for recognizing that he has something to write and a language with which he can express his thought.

The sage, Voltaire, wrote in the eighteenth century, "The necessity of saying something, the embarrassment of consciousness of having nothing to say and the desire to exhibit ability are three thing sufficient to render even a great man ridiculous." As teachers of English, we are the first to realize that there is a big difference between having to write something and having something to write. As teachers of English, we have long recognized that language is merely the vehicle for the cargo thought. Necessarily, then, the first step in developing a sensuous writing ability is the development of a pre-writing ability--the ability to perceive with exactness the world about us.

And how do we develop in our students the ability to perceive with exactness? This entails perceiving not only through the sense of sight, but also through the sense of hearing -- through all the senses we possess. This entails leading the students to perceive not in big blurs of generalities, but rather in specific and concrete detail. It entails leading the students to recognize individualizing characteristics that make it possible for him to distinguish every object as being a unique object -- unique because of its color, its size, its speed, its relation to other objects, its texture, or any other individualizing characteristic. And it entails helping the student to discover a language with which he can make use of all that he senses.

It is from this pre-writing activity--this think time--this time of perceiving and relating the world about him that a student generates something to write about. It would be a crippling measure on the part of the teacher at this stage of the writing process to limit the scope of the students' discoveries--a limitation which might occur if adequate time for thinking were not allowed, if the teacher forces an uninteresting subject for thought upon the students, or if the teacher accepted only correctness (by her terms) of expression.

By using coercive instruments--haste, correctness, and conformity, the teacher inhibits the process of thinking, inhibits the natural instincts of curiousity, inhibits self realization on the part of the student. On the other hand, by discovering the interests and needs of the students, by bringing well written articles from literature--or wherever they may be found--to the awareness of the students, by involving students in new experiences--not necessarily language based experiences, but rather any experience that provided an opportunity for perceiving and for relating, and by respecting the thoughts of students however they might be expressed, the teacher provides the atmosphere and environment for language development and for the students' self realization.

The role of the teacher, then, is to help the student toward greater mental growth -- to elicit from the students, through participation, their responses to that which they sense, probing them to think in greater depth, exploring with them the possibilities of evolving new relationships and helping them to discover words to express their ideas. This undoubtedly, is the most important step in the writing process and the most beneficial step with regards to the mental health of the student. Every student needs the opportunity to express his thoughts easily--freely--without confining and conforming rules, if he is to discover himself and his interactions with the world about him. And it is just this activity which should occur as the initial step in developing the ability to write well.

A second element to consider in developing a good writing ability is that of motivating the student to write to the best of his ability rather than writing to "get by". It is foolhardy of English teachers to think that as teachers--as people possessing more authority than the students--we can coerce them to write well. We can't. We can utilize the philosophy of Dewey though, that a person learns when he needs to learn or when he wants to learn, and we can set up situations in which the students will want to write well. We can and we need to provide the student with a purpose for writing and with an audience to write to-- an audience preferably composed of his peers, for students can express their ideas more easily to their peers than to anyone else as a rule. "Pupils", stated Ruth Reeves, Chairman of the National Council of Teachers of English, "are best motivated to write if they know their work will reach an audience." With that in mind, the school newspaper or school magazine, if the articles which are published are not limited as having to generate from a select staff, seems a most desirable instrument of learning at all grade levels.

Teachers can also motivate students to better writing by valuing each individual effort. We need to put aside the idea that we are doing a good job of teaching when we keep the student on his toes--and on his knees. When the writing experience is a pleasant one uninhibited by directives (the do's and don'ts of writing) and the students' weaknesses in skills are noted but not taught (unless a student wants to be taught) until a skill-building period, and when a students is given ample time to write material that he finds satisfying, these factors, too, motivate the student. Without pressure, without fear of reprisal, he can write easily. Hr can write with intense concentration upon the subject and with consideration of the effect his writing will have upon his audience. He can write with a sense of self-satisfaction arising from a job well done.

And a last element to consider in the development of a good writing ability is that of providing the student with the knowledge of a form within which or about which he can shape his ideas. Students by observing and analyzing selected writings can find--to a certain extent--direction and method as used by professional writers which can assist them in expressing and shaping their ideas.

Sir Geoffrey Crowther in an essay entitled "English and American Education" appearing in Essays of Our Time projects the thought, "The proper test of an education is whether it teaches the pupil to think and whether it awakens his interest in applying his brain to the various problems and opportunities that life presents." This thought, many of us in the field of education would deem sound. What is its relationship to the teaching of

English -- and to the teaching of writing in particular?

If teachers of English can slice through the choking underbrush of tradition and precedent that seems to have anesthetized the minds of students, past and present; if teachers can remove the manacles of custom that have funneled the mental energy of students into a confining and conforming flow of thought; if teachers can eliminate--even portions--of the long and repetitive process of mastering rules, learning patterns, practicing drills, filling in blanks--starting at third grade normally and continuing through elementary and secondary schools, --and if teachers can lead students to be aware and to think sensitively as a result of the pre-writing and the writing processes, the teaching of English will have experienced a major breakthrough -- the effects foreseeably diffusing in many directions and fostering a more humane mankind.

* * *

If you have found within this article any ideas that have challenged you to think or that have assisted you in shaping your own philosophy of teaching, it should be recognized that the ideas contained within this article have evolved as a result of an N.D.E.A. research grant to Northwestern University. It has been from a dedicated and visionary group of educators led by Dr. Wallace Douglas, Professor of English and Education and Director of the Curriculum Center in English; Dr. Stephen Judy, Assistant to the Director, the Curriculum Center in English; Dr. Sidney Bergquist, Assistant Professor of Education, Northwestern University and Mr. Carl Barth, English Teacher, Hunter College High School, that these ideas have taken shape.

TYPEWRITER KEYS AT TEN SPACES

M. Alan Metzger

(The following is a reply to an article entitled A Composition Unit for Grade Five which appeared in the February 1967 issue of Elementary English. The article was written by Paul Fletcher, an English superviser.)

Paul Fletcher, I challenge you to a duel! Having read your article in the February 1967 issue of Elementary English on a composition unit for grade five, I feel I must take exception to many of its allegations and assertions. In doing this I feel somewhat like a latter-day David going against Goliath since you are, after all, a language arts coordinator, and I a mere classroom English teacher. But difference in credentials notwithstanding, here I sit, keyboard in ahnd, taking careful aim.

First of all let me clarify what I feel to be the basic differences between us: our fundamental attitudes towards composition and its teaching; the methods used to gain the desired ends; and the desired ends themselves. Anything in your article which would not be included in any of the above categories could be taken as an area in which we both agree. I must admit, however, that there aren't many such areas of accord.

You may well ask yourself why do I bother to voice my opinion? Why didn't I merely flip past your article and move on to another, more agreeable to my way of thinking. The answer lies in the fact that I consider Elementary English to be an important professional organ of current trends in language arts and their application. I feel that anything published in this magazine has great implications for teachers across the entire United States. Therefore, I feel that when something is published in this journal with which I take extreme professional exception, it should be refuted, or at least an opposing point of view should be heard. Nor for one minute, Mr. Fletcher, am I saying that you are WRONG in your opinions concerning composition, nor am I saying that I am necessarily RIGHT in mine. All I am really stating is that I disagree with your points and that I would like my own feelings on the matter given, if you will pardon the political overtones, equal time.

In your opening paragraph you refer to the writing of composition as a "hopeless lockstep" and state that it is "difficult" to interest students in writing one. To me this represents a defeatist attitude which, if truly held by the classroom teacher, would most certainly result in the very evil it purports to cure, namely, a poor attitude on the students' part. If a football team is really convinced it is playing a losing game, isn't it bound to lose? Or more to the point, if the coach is convinced his team can't make it--it's a sure bet the team won't make it. If we really believe the teaching of composition is a "hopeless lockstep" doesn't that attitude itself which even the most careful teacher can't hide, have serious implications in the classroom?

As a fifth grade English teacher for fifteen years, I am well aware of the difficulties in teaching composition. I've had them all. But I do not believe it is all that hopeless or impossible. If I did I would have turned to greener fields long ago. We teachers must not be discouraged by the failures we incur, and we've all had them. But we must keep trying a different technique, a new method, an untried idea to keep our composition programs vital and alive. If we feel at the beginning that we can't succeed, we shall never succeed. If it's true that nothing succeeds like success, the converse is also true: nothing fails like failure. Perhaps our ideas don't pay dividends right off, but given time and effort that may prove successful. We can't let some failurss make us forget our successes and we do have them. They may not show up for years, but they're there all right.

Instead of feeling that we are involved in a desperate, almost dismal task, we must get across to our students the idea thet composition is a vital, lively activity into which they can throw themselves heartily and happily. That it is a basic tool of communication and necessary for many different reasons. Unless we ourselves truly feel this way, how can we convince our pupils of it-and unless we do convince them of it, how will it ever become so?

Secondly, the rigid structuring of the first piece of writing which you recoommend seems to eliminate any latent enthusiasm on the students' part right at the beginning. For the few students whose minds run in this highly structured, rigid pattern it may prove fine. But what of the rest? Remember, these are only fifth graders, not high school seniors facing college entrance exams. By giving the students not only the exact topic, but then telling them exactly what ideas they are to arrive at in each paragraph, we are certainly structuring their work. But is that the desired end? How effectively is their innate sense of experimentation and innovation being motivated? True, the resulting sample printed in your article shows great structure. It is as carefully set up as a brick wall--and just as unyielding. Every brick is in place, every thought in its niche, but whose bricks and whose thoughts--the child's or his instructor's? How foreign to the natural liveliness and flexibility of the typical fifth-grader (who is such an untypical human being) is this rigid structuring and organization. I also feel that using a European symbol to interpret American history is, as the British would say, a bit "un-cricket."

I do agree that the earlier we plunge the students into writing the better. But how much better it would be were the students' naturally active imaginations allowed to guide their hands. The structure might not be so geometric, but it would give us some wonderful insight into our new group of fifth graders. I feel that the freer the associations, the more rampant we allow our students' minds and, ergo, their pens, to roam about their papers, the more effective will be our over-all teaching of composition.

This brings us to the third area of disagreement, the desired ends of composition instruction. Just what are we trying to acheive after all? Here, Mr. Fletcher, I feel that you and I part company to a much wider degree than in the two preceding areas. Before our attitudes and methods have been fields apart. Now our basic philosophies are oceans apart.

From your article I can assume that composition is a matter of careful construction, thorough development of ideas, and correct grammar. Let me say right here that this is a very popular, even prevalent, conception of composition as it whould be taught. It has not been proven false. Nor has it proven true. But is is not the only theory or belief concerning written composition!

To some of us in the teaching field composition is not merely a matter of structure, completeness, and grammatical accuracy. It is, rather, a means of self-expression, a means of putting down one's ideas (not necessarily structured according to a teacher's pre-set patterns) and a means of allowing students to know themselves and evaluate themselves. Your composition unit for fifth grade does not, to my way of thinking, allow for any of the above. In addition to the structure restricting limits which your unit imposes, there is the matter of strict marking, "to let the students know where they stand." To me, this is more accurately expressed as letting them know where they fall down. How discouraging it must be to a student who has honestly attempted to express himself on paper (not that your unit allows for this) and then be slapped down because his ideas, regardless of their merit, are not well annotated with commas, periods, and the like. It is almost certain that in future assignments, these students will be working far harder for grammatical accuracy than they will for freshness of approach and relevance of self expression. In fact the very points which to many of us are most important--freshness--receive the smallest number of credits on your suggested marking scale! In addition to this, the post-tests which you suggest certainly do not seem to recognize the value of an individual approach or of free expression.

Here are your fifth graders being slapped down on their very first written exercise. Any new idea, if it is grammatically incorrect, or structurally weak, becomes a demerit..How, then, are these young people, working to learn their language, perhaps fascina by its peculiarities and potential, ever to enjoy the exercise of creating in that language? Under such a rigid system, perhaps inducement to composition is a "hopless lockstep". But what creates this problem? I believe it is the rigidity of the system itself.

How much better it would seem to be is these youngsters, fresh and chockful of ideas and feelings, were allowed to experiment with this language which they have inherited. How much more valuabl it would be to let them realize it is their language and allow them to fashion it to their own use before being molded into its demands. In my view, and I am not alone in this, students have something to say. They should be allowed to say it in their way. Even more important, they should realize that they have something to say. The should be given the chance to recognize the worth of their writing as free expressions of themselves. Which is more important, grammatical perfection or self-expression? I believe our students should become free thinkers (not in the colloquial sense) rather than more language mechanics working in present forms. It has been shown time and time again that grammatical facility has little or no application to successful composition. It is up to the classroom teacher to decide what he wants. Even in schools where grammar is required, the wise instructur can allow his students to express themselves at their own levels and in their own ways.

Now, Mr. Fletcher, I have had my say. Perhaps you will feel, maybe rightly so, that I am an impudent upstart to have refuted your article so vehemently. I hope not, for I would be the first to defend your right to publish an article such as this according to your own beliefs. All I have attempted to do here is set forth a different, an opposing view of the same subject. I honestly don't know which of us is right and I am sure we could both find many supporters, inside the classroom and out. But here is where I stand, and as the French would say, "Vive le difference"!

HUMANISM IN THE CREATIVE WRITING PROCESS

Anne Cogdell

One issue of today in education is the behavior and future of the individual. Educators are looking for the defenses of creativity, the full integrity of the creator's experiences, his complex human nature and his ability to create reality as he perceives it. The creative writing process tends to develop the individual potentials and independence which is relative to changed behavior in the individual. One might think it easy to develop creative talent and to recognize creative impulses and creative work. Difficulties are encountered. In trying to find a course of action that may help alleviate some of the difficulties, humanism in the creative writing process seems to be an approach that would be saluted with applause.

Humanism considers the individual and human values. It develops the potentials of the individual and centers creative expression on the man and human powers. Human aspects fit into the scheme of creative growth and growth of the creator. The potentialities to create can be inspired through humanism.

To weave humanism into the process of writing, the teacher must not demand or try to teach creative writing, and must not be concerned with the literary but the competence of expression through language.

As in the language and thought of Hughes Mearnes and Mauree Applegate, children should be free to write and express their ideas in their own original way. Expression is through the child's individuality. The criterion for fresh individual writing is distinctly that children have not been spoiled by too much of the standard; they have unreality. "Humanism is creative writing," Mearns further states, "the school of creativity cares not how inept and sloven a lad may be if he sees something personal and finds it taking slow possession of him."

The child's world provokes the creative urge. An openness to experience is animation. Perception is motivated by variety in the thought process and acts. Independence of outside influences with individual concepts, thought and judgment are vital stimulants in weaving in humanism. The child becomes sensitive to experiences, focus is placed on unique thoughts and expression, and inspiration aids the change necessary in perceiving and recording the lines. Creative writing, finely interwoven with humanism is personal, revealing itself only in given atmosphere. Creative expression is perpetuated if encouraged through guidance and expressed appreciation; it unfolds, develops and becomes increasingly mature through conditions unique for developing spontaneous writing.

Needs of children are diversified but can be met through humanism in writing. When writing is related to his own individual interests and needs, the child tends to express himself and to become involved. He, himself, becomes entombed and captivated. He is one interested audience. His work is not strained and is free of anxiety which is often displayed when the child is writing to please the teacher. At the end of a writing process, the child should feel successful, proud and confident of his creation. To have meaning, the creation should have been written by the individual children each in his own way, expressive of his needs. The nature of awareness enriched through humanism in the teacher's approach, enables children to focus individually on that which is around. Through writing the child makes clear things as he sees them.

Competence in writing can be mastered through a variety of forms. Children can and do write. They must be stimulated. The teacher is the key to good learning experiences that produce good writings. He is the gateway through which humanism enters, flourishes, and is fortified.

To insure the child's development in the use of his language, the teacher must strive to provide an atmosphere and situations that are conducive for stimulating, practicing, and evaluating. Experience learning, a dominant force of humanism results from the child doing something or being present when something is being done. The teacher not only provides experiences for writing, he is involved. He is a participant in whatever the child is doing. The teacher encourages confidence, freedom of exploration, realizes diversity in background and language, is aware of connection between oral and written patterns, shows pleasure in children's work and shares ideas and literary pieces and materials. Many qualities developed and nurtured by the teacher leads to successful creations. The small spark of faith, needs and values, individual sensory skills, thought perception, awareness and appreciation for literature and beauty and the ability to evaluate critically are forces to be cherished in children. In guiding them to write, the teacher must be sure there is definite relevance between what is to be written and what is a part of their lives.

The nature of writing that one does will be determined frequently by his social and cultural background. The child's individual style must be appreciated by the teacher. When the child puts into words what he thinks and feels or imagines, and his words reach others, he feels a real creative satisfaction. Writing has become his means of expression.

Bacon reminds us, "Writing maketh an exact man. Being exact and precise are qualities to be desired. Man strives to achieve this goal." It begins with youth and creation. It ends only as man acknowledges his own degrees of success in the creative writing process enforced with humanism.

Hugh Mearns says, "that in every soul there resides a spark of creativity that should be nurtured and cherished as earnestly and intensively as possible." Writing down thoughts makes them clear and sharp. One's sense of responsibility is encouraged. The child aspires to the creation of something of beauty.

In incorporating humanism into the creative writing process, writing becomes self-centered. It fits into the child's scheme of learning and his potentials and values that are to be nurtured. It is concerned with the dignity, uniqueness and probity of the individual. The child puts into words what satisfies his creative urges. He conquers and masters his own language. He makes language his tool, his paint brush, his very own means of creation.

A PERNICIOUS APPROACH TO PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS

Carol Collier

Paragraph analysis, if it is to be useful not only to the fourth-grader writing about his trip to the burlesque show with Daddy but also to the suburban housewife struggling with a paper for her adult education course on the Psychology of the Immature Husband, must be intelligible to those other than its inventor. I believe that my associates[1] and I have discovered a content-oriented method of paragraph analysis which is both simple to understand and easy to apply.

Our observations are supported by the each-one-reach-one grammatical theory of Dr. Frank Laubach, the missionary, which is discussed in his book No Bantu Says Ain't. According to Dr. Laubach's controversial theory sentences are made up of words. This appears to be a deceptively simple concept, and, of course, when he says words, he means those of the body-locality-tangible object sort or the doing-continuing-remaining-occurring-existing type, etc. However, a sentence does not contain just any words. The first word, because of its meaning, attracts another word complementary to it just like a railroad engine pulls its string of cars. At the same time each word attracts the reader's attention and pulls him along. This accounts for the word by word reading of some students who can't pull themselves along under their own steam. When each word in the sentence has attracted all the words relevant to it the sentence stops. This cessation of words is usually signaled by a mark of end punctuation which serves the same purpose as the flagman in the caboose of our hypothetical train waving his flag to signal the train's end.

This each-one-reach-one theory of the sentence evolves into the chain-link-fence theory at the paragraph level. Because the paragraph, just like the sentence, is shaped by its content, the content acts like two fence posts between which the sentences of the paragraph are stretched. Each word is a chain link. Each sentence is a row of chain links which attracts another sentence relevant to it until all relevant sentences are drawn to each other. Each paragraph attracts another relevant paragraph in the same way that two adjacent sections of fence share a single post. The piece stops when all relevant paragraphs have been drawn together.

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[1] I am referring to my colleagues at the Timother Leary Sitar and Kar Kustomizing Skool in Los Angeles.

All readers expect something different from each of the various kinds of writing. Given a paragraph out of context, nine out of ten students will ask where it came from, so that, like Linus[2] they can have their mouths, i.e. their minds, all set for it. The reason for such expectation is that, without knowing it, readers perceive that each type of writing, because of the content concerned, sets up its own pattern.

Here is an excerpt from a book of social commentary. Works of this nature often set up a pattern of Thesis, some more Writing, and X, the unknown or unexpected factor.

> (T) "Maybe we ought to scream," says Jane. (W) Then she says to the fellow in the hat: "Tell me when it's five o'clock, will you, pussycat? I have to get dressed and go see Sam Spiegel." (x) And then Baby Jane goes: "Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
>
> (X) eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeyes!" says Diana Vreeland, (W) the editor of Vogue. (T) "Jane Holzer is the most contemporary girl I know."

Tom Wolfe
The Kandy*Kolored Tangerine *Flake
Streamline Baby
p. 208

Notice how one paragraph draws the other to it, and notice also how this pattern can be reversed to WXT.

Another example of the content shaping the pattern of the paragraph would be the Make your point, Give information, Make your point again pattern of movie reviews.

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[2] Refers to a Charles Shultz cartoon in which the character "Linus" discovers that lunch is to consist of tuna fish instead of the peanut butter and jelly sandwich he had been expecting.

Woman Times Seven--(M) Shirley MacLaine plays seven ogling parts that look as if they have been market researched as the ideal woman and make-up buying prospect. (G) De Sica directed, but Joseph E. Levine presented it. (M) It's soul is Hollywood's.

The New Yorker
July 22, 1967
p. 14

Articles about foreign cars often follow the TR-3 pattern in which the Thesis is stated first, followed by three sentences Reporting facts to support the thesis.

Denbeigh Super-Chauvinist Mk.VII Saloon
(T) The Super-Chauvinist retains all the beloved design of the Denbeigh engineering practice. (R_1) It has a truly robust hooter, excellent winkers and a first-class jack. (R_2) Its performance is not torrid but beautifully matched brakes fade as one, and engine scream drowns all distracting sounds. (R_3) Its leaking of petrol fumes is well nigh intolerable; luckily fuel is rapidly guzzled up by the engine before the driver can be overcome.

Car and Driver
March, 1967
p. 50

On the other hand, because content does shape the paragraph, an article about American cars follows this pattern: Get the reader's attention, Tell them more about the topic, make your Objective clear.

Chevrolet Camaro Z-28
(G) Almost! (T) Inch by cubic inch, Chevrolet warily circles the enthusiast, closing in for the kill. (O) With the Camaro Z-28, they're getting warm--very close to what we'd like to see the Camaro become.

Car and Driver
March, 1967
p.37

There are, of course, many other types of writing involving different patterns. A complete list of such patterns is to be published shortly to aid the student in analyzing writing types. Included in this list will be the RSVP pattern of announcements of social interest, the MENSA pattern for papers of academic interest, and the CB&Q pattern for analyzing railroad schedules. With this analysis the writer is free to write, knowing the content will give his paper shape. Thus, if the student is unable to find a pettern in either his writing or the writing of others, it is likely that either the reader's or writer's perception of the content is somewhat cloudy.

THE TEACHING OF NARRATIVE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Charles Newman

"Do you have a purpose? Or are you just writing?"
contemporary artifact

Any systematic analysis contains a mystery--or at least a mystique--for it is never clear when any particular analysis is complete. There always seems to be one more way to structure the same debate. In this respect, there is no more transcendental a science than the teaching of writing, since the pedagogue is invariably expected to impart the most ambiguous propositions as God's truth. The God of oomposition is constant, we are told, he is even tangible--but he must always be presented in a new new way. Thus, the teacher is doomed to be an apologist in his own house. The more he insists on the reality of his task, the more illusory it seems to be. He can hardly admit that he is being paid to do witness to a mystery. His freedom consists largely in attacking the semantics of his colleagues--he is limited only, but finally, by his students' satisfaction with their language. But how to make it new again! He can update his anecdotes, bring the bibliography up an historical notch. Finally, he can take account of the necessity of communicating in a democracy, and insist that the student's ability to think will be of great satisfaction to him.

There will come a time, however, when he will throw up his hands, recalling that only two or three people in any one generation really have anything to say, and that significant writing is the product of a discipline or motive which no formal education can inspire. Tolstoy, he will recall, equipped with charismatic authority, unqualified credentials, and a controlled environment, could not begin to liberate--make literate--his serfs. It is that teacher, at that moment, to which this is addressed.

Let us go on the assumption that it is the basic method itself which is contradictory to the realities of our task. The breaking down of a large mass of complex material into component parts, and then reasoning from those parts to a reconstructed whole--induction--has been the glory of scientific progress and the touchstone of modern pedagogy. The respectability of the method is particularly appealing to those who teach writing. Most likely unable to write himself, yet professionaly in awe of those who can, the teacher surrounds himself with inductive paraphernalia, not to show that writing itself is scientific (if it were, he would do it himself) but that his relationship to such a phenomenon is traditionally rational and systematic. (Words can change lives!) One must control one's self-indulgence.)

Hence, each generation of teachers takes apart the same stories in slightly differnnt ways stressing social conscience, imagery, linguistics--whatever that day's youth may lack. The reading of more contemporary literature may cause a momentary turmoil. It does not fit the categories quite--some adaptation and ingenuity is required--but there is a time and place for everything.

Still, at some point, the teacher will admit that no matter how precisely a story may be divided into discrete techniques, no one has shown, for one moment, how these techniques become a story. The only possible judgment is after-the-fact. We are reasoning from the general to the specific, but we cannot put the specifics back together again. It is not only that we find our goal impossible --that is acceptable--but our very method is suspect. The inductive method, in this case, has failed. We cannot reason from the part to the whole, for the whole, unquestionably, is more than the sum of its parts. All we can do apparently, is classify--we are up against a mystery--we are back to crude deduction. We are not even modern.

Most theorists get to this point, and they generally have one of two reactions. The first tends to make a romance of despair. Literature is "human," ultimately, so we must concentrate on "human values" now that the method is defunct. Some teachers do seem to have more success than others in helping people to write--but this is traceable to no theory but rather to a remarkable personality, what we call "inspiration" or "encouragement." Our effort at definition has cut off large areas of experience--perhaps a good-natured circumspection will allow the "natural" to reassert itself. We'll read more poetry and ignore the texts. We won't talk of grammar and usage, but of "freshness of vision," "depth of feeling," "effective form." It does not occur to these romantics that such language may be as stultifying as the jargon is purports to replace. In any case, it is a language to be borne by professionals, not students.

The second reaction is more stoic. Its viewpoint is essentially that categories are useful in their totality, as they are all we have--but that small-minded teachers have used them poorly. Reading poetry is all well and good if you know how it works, but you can't really appreciate a poem until you scan it. The framework against which the student must test his talent is simply not made comprehensive enough. A poem itself never taught anyong how to write any better than a textbood on a poem. A student will learn if the teacher will only synthesize what we have analysed.

The curious thing about these apparently opposed reactions is that their basic assumption is the same; namely, that the teacher is not using what is available, whether it be his soul or his apparatus. In one case he is not enough of a king, in the other, not enough of a philosopher. In his theory, in his life, he is deficient.

It is proper perhaps, when science is discredited to place the burden on the personal. It is our point of view that there is little salvageable in either the method or the teacher, because far too much has been expected of both. It is a truism worth repeating that the material we are dealing with is within the student. We are dealing with a process so complex, so idiosyncretic, that it perhaps cannot be taught.

But there are things which may be best ignored that ordinarily prevent a student from using his own material. Like alcohol, this program cannot inspire in itself, but hopefully it may relieve some of the anxieties which limit the inspiration. There's very little a teacher can do, but precisely because it is so little, it is all the more important that he try. What follows is an attempt to relax the uneasy liason between the theorist and the teacher so that the teacher, in turn, can relax a little with his students.

II

Categories probably limit the student, but they invariably help the teacher. As long as the teacher remembers that he and the student are involved in entirely different processes, he will probably be of assistance to that student.

Let us recall the basic argument. The inductive theory goes something like this: the technique of writing is so complex, that it must be broken into component parts, each of which should be mastered by the student through supervised practice, and each of which sustains a process of logical development. At some point, if such pursuit is diligent, the student will synthesize these disparate elements in a style in which, the grace of presentation will do justice to the quality of ideas. Now if that is not a mystery, what is? And it doesn't clarify things to say, further, that composition may be conventionally broken down into Exposition, Description, Persuasion, and Narrative. That is only to say it is a conventional mystery. How do you put these categories together to make a style? And for that matter, how do you break down a style into such formulae? But let us accept the mystery for what it is and not romanticize it. It is really none of our business since we have no control over it.

However, and this is the point; simply because we cannot analyze the process sufficiently, does not mean that we cannot perform the simplest logical act--*which is to isolate and differentiate our purposes*. For it seems to us, that in each generations attempt to crack that mystery, to synthesize the process, we have ceased to differentiate between many kinds of writing, writing devoted to different ends, and the different techniques which each demands.

Let us look at those categories again. When the student becomes more sophisticated--in our terms, more specialized--he will soon find that any successful exposition involves certain kinds of logical transitions, which can be learned almost by rote, from a close analysis of model paragraphs. The relationship of thought to its organizing punctuation can be learned visually even before it is mastered verbally. He will learn which adjectives are portentous, which nouns he can verify, which assertions of ego are prejudicial to him. He will learn a critical vocabulary indispensable to the particular discipline. He will, in fact, structure his work in terms of the opinions he is dealing with, some of which may or may not be his own. Under pressure, he will learn which questions are best left out, and which aims do not commit him beyond the context of the problem he faces. The descriptive portion of this process will probably evolve along one or two patterns--the historical or the journalistic. This division will be encouraged, as he progresses, by his career-aims. His style will incorporate the limitations of time and space (the job) or the definition of a style sheet and reference/bibliography. The element of persuasion will, of course, involve a specialized vocabulary and structure, depending upon whom he is trying to convince.

This is only to insist that narrative, too, claims its own world, and with it, particular techniques. It is also to imply that of our four categories, narrative is least related to the others, and in fact, suffers materially in conjunction with the other three. This, because it is the least analytical of them--or rather--it analyzes different material under different rules. When you are writing a story, you are doing something quite different from any other sort of writing--an act which perhaps gains its distinction solely from the fact that fewer people seem to do it well. With their own vocabularies, purposes, structure, even *psychological states*, we stress the discontinuity of these categories.

A funny thing happens to narrative in modern textbooks--it tends to disappear. A typical transition is to leap from "building paragraphs," to "description," to "thinking straight," to "using a dictionary." When it does appear, it does so, suddenly, apologetically, usually claiming that it will either help expository writing or the social standing of the student.

"If you learn to write good stories, you can use entertaining, true narratives not only for informal, friendly letters but also for convincing illustration of main points in your exposition."
(Warriner, p. 323)

At the very least, the theory apparently goes, the use of the imagination can't hurt for a week or so, writing a story being a kind of recess from the more rigorous and business of getting on in school and the world. Narrative is infrequently, if ever, treated as a discipline unto itself, which may have some relation to the understanding of art and life, but deserves to be taught as an end in itself. There's a very good reason for this shoddiness. Narrative, as it is directed to fiction, cannot fit easily into the kind of logical development that textbook curricula requires. Hence, the half-hearted attempts to somehow make writing stories relevant to spelling lists and writing business letters. It is not surprising that these compilers attempt to blur the distinction between rote memory and the imagination. They are the same people who think all good stories are distinguished by a resolved conflict, a most interesting character, and a chronological plot.

In an age when all order is subject to question, the urge to induct--to become whole again--is particularly compelling. We must resist this in composition in much the same way as philosophy, in the first flush of positivism, rejected the urge to systematic one perception of the world. This is one answer to the stoics who would structure our categories more completely, and to the romantics who would leave it up to the unique personality. We are not against either tendency per se--we simply do not know how to deal with them in a lesson-plan. Writing, for our purposes, is a synergistic process, i.e., the cooperative action of discrete agencies such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the effects taken independently. Our task is to isolate those effects most finally.

Let's pursue these assumptions a little further. For if the index of these texts confuses us as to exactly where narrative comes in the progress of the mind, the chapter itself will make us wonder how a story differs from an essay.

It would be too easy to construct one's own pastiche of these efforts and then tear it apart according to our accusation. It would be unfair as well, since certainly these editors themselves have tongue-in-cheek. Let's deal simply with some language common to all of these efforts and see where it leads us.

In most texts, the student is urged at least once, in italics, to (1) BE CLEAR. The basic problem here is that you are not indicating that there are different kinds of clarities, depending upon what you want to see. In effect, you are referring the student in all likelihood, to your marginal comments on his essays, and accordingly, he will envision a story which is clear like an essay. We only ask; is an image clear like a logical transition? Is dialogue clear like a quotation or a prooftext? Are ideas clear by their subordination to argument or to plot? If this program is to have any use at all, every effort must be made to avoid referring the student to his graded schoolwork as models, in any sense, for his fiction. And every time you use a vague reference like these, the student has nothing but his scholastic experience upon which to draw.

(2) BE NATURAL. Groping for words is likely to be humiliating and pretentious, and as students try to find words to connote their experience, their efforts are likely to be embarrassing to everyone. To alleviate this, teachers tend to encourage children "to be themselves"--that is, as a nice, bright boy should be in school. They are referred to experiences which are natural, like "life on a farm," "last minute touchdowns," and to use language which is equal to them. Our question is this: who will attempt to find unique language for an experience which is chosen essentially for the corroboration of his teacher and/or peers? Obviously, the student will take the short cut.

A shocking fact is that honesty and simplicity in writing is worth nothing unless what you are honest about is worth revelation, and what you are simple about is initially complex. The experience which these books propose--a world of air rifles, parakeets, and homerooms is unlikely to challenge anyone's literary powers. These are the texts which ask the student to organize his stories by alphabetical outline, insist that a title and purpose be created before a word is on paper, want characters presented "realistically," whatever that means, and close with a blind admonition to find a "suitable incident, find a story to tell."

"Tom chuckles when he sees his air-rifle because there is a favorite family story behind it." (Modern Composition; p. 69)

All that is being asked of a student in this case is to write an essay in which he can get away with a little more contrary speculation than usual. Narrative may, in fact, help a student in every aspect of his language skills, but the end of narrative is no more than elaboration of one's expository powers than the end of poetry is to condense one's ideas.

A word of elaboration at this point. It is too easy for a theorist to discourage a teacher by implying that the rules the teacher inflicts on his students have had no demonstrable application to geniuses. "Was Proust clear?" we can chortle. Was Gide sincere, Henry James natural? Did Thomas Wolfe make an outline? Does Becket begin with a purpose? This is not the point. In the first place, it is impossible to generalize from patterns of artistic behavior as it is to show that writing stories makes better citizens. If this program is to be helpful, both the student and teacher must assume that there is some relation between the word and the world which is worth exploring for its own sake. And although we do not want to exclude anyone by fiat, if the student has not become aware of this in his day to day activity, it is unlikely that you can induce it in the classroom. We do not oppose conventional rules because great artists apparently ignored them--we oppose them because they are directed at covering a textbook, at childish art. There is nothing childish about art--particularly children's art--there is nothing more serious because we know so little about it. Fiction and exposition are too contradictory at too many levels for us to save one with the other. And textbook experience and personal experience are too different for us to waste our time trying to synthesize them. Every little bit of your help certainly does not help, for this will accumulate into what you are able to teach best; the student will give you back not what he has found out but what you have taught best--and what will be exposition.

All well and good for the student. But what about the teacher? Shouldn't he have some idea of what he is being so meritoriously vague about? Very well. The contemporary text usually defines narrative as "telling a story." That is fine. Its lack of definition suits our purposes. It has no immediate scholastic overtones--if anything it will appeal to outside influences such as mass media, which is a problem to be confronted later. Our first learning experiences are literary in nature--prayers, stories, parables, song-poetry, while most of our serious schooling will be devoted to expository analysis. Now, through the aid of such lesson plans as this, we are supposed to cope with that lag in imagination; after years of effectively channeling our fantasy, our myths, we are suddenly asking the student to revivify those systematizing powers and be rewarded for it. This is why your vagueness is so practical. The student will be surprised enough without your clapping hands. Let us speculate what is salvageable.

Now, as theorist to teacher, let us make use of some rough categories again. On the most elemental semantic level, narrative is simply description plus time.

(1) Personal Experience

Time means experience--in the case of narrative--personal experience. The important word is personal, for narrative draws upon experience which cannot be ordered by scholastic rules, which cannot be initiated by social reward, and which cannot be analyzed by existing theory. It draws upon faculties either ignored or explicitly controlled in other areas of writing; its difficulties and satisfactions are almost always extra-curricular in nature. It is a matter of saying in effect, which words are my words. What do I sound like on paper? Whereas other writing is written to be read, narrative initially, is simply meant to be written.

(2) Literary Experience

Personal experience, if it is to be communicated by fiction (we are not concerned to whom it is to be communicated yet) is literary experience. This requires the creation of an environment where literary experience matters--matters as a thing in itself--not as an adjunct to other academic pursuits. How to structure such an environment without basing it on someone else's value system, how to fit it into "education," is the crucial problem here. Metaphorically, we ought to create a sealed chamber, in which the student is required to spend a certain amount of time and give the most basic kind of evidence that he was really there. We want him to work out his own rules for dealing with it.

(3) Sound Experience

Literary experience involves both sense and sound, and in our texts, invariably, the latter subordinated to the former. Narrative is closer to poetry than to exposition. Thus, we will work from poetry to fiction, rather than from criticism to verse. Sound is predominant in this plan, if for no other reason because it has been subordinate in others. Sound is not to be confused with rime.

(4) The Voice

Personal sound evolves a voice, and whereas the other three categories require their own kind of tone and consistency, narrative requires uniqueness as well as logic. It is important that we learn to write well about things we don't care very much about, but in fiction, since the material is ourselves, there is no point in taking anything for granted, or catering to truths which we can reach more easily by other means. It is the dramatic logic of the personality, its very peculiarity, which impresses us in narrative, for fiction must capture our interest before we can question its purpose.

The search for a voice then, supercedes any search for a method. There are no first principles from which it may be deduced. The narrative voice is the key to any fiction's richness, since it is the primary voice which becomes, or coheres, other voices.

(5) Where We Leave

There are, of course, a few techniques which may be passed on for each individual's experimentation. Spelling and punctuation (both standardized and innovative) affect sound and order. Plot outlines may be standardized to some extent, and provide models to make the student aware of the alternatives at any one moment. When to cut--when to elaborate--cannot be generalized, but various sections of any one student's work may be compared against one another for effectiveness. The creation and resolution of conflict is subject to the same treatment, as is characterization. Description and dialogue can be practiced separately and then fused with the aid of symbolism or imagery by a variety of modest models. There are ways to title and/or end a story, there are rules of revision. All of these devices will be overused, become primary sustenance, no matter how disingenuously they are offered. This is none of our concern. The possibility of a technique will not be realized until it is used, no matter how badly; the control of technique will not be realized until the technique itself has become redundant. This part of the program will be of value only if it is built upon the considerations previously outlined, and followed by a willingness to absent ourselves from the process most finally. For if we have succeeded at all, by the time the student is involved with techniques as these, he should be approaching that synthesis which makes us unnecessary.

The foregoing may seem too paradoxical to even the most ironic of teachers, for it will be noted that as the teacher is constantly urged to respect the student's freedom, they are both, actually, through the lesson plans, conforming to rather strict rules. The point is, of course, that the rules are not the same as those to which the student is traditionally obedient. Their special nature is that they are unenforceable by the teacher, and relevant to the student only insofar as he can make personal use of them.

The aim is to confront as directly as possible, that part of the student's experience which is purely literary--that is, the desire to develop a unique method of transcribing personal experience. At the very least, it is hoped that the effort will demonstrate that such experience does exist, and that there are certain modest ways of starting to make use of it. Whether this can have practical application depends upon the moral and aesthetic values you judge it by--and that is something we must, conveniently or not, ignore for the moment.

If there is a basic assumption, it is not a faith in the method, but rather a faith that if private literary experience is meaningful enough, nothing can stop it from becoming shared and public. A purpose worthy of attention will emerge from the process to the extent that we do not impose one.

RANDOM GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT COMPOSITION GLEANED FROM LANGUAGE TEXTS

(Are we in accord with most of these? If so, the statements should point a direction for future planning.)

1. If a high school English teacher is to do a competent job with the teaching of literature and composition, he must not be expected to teach more than 100 students a day.
   _________agree;_______agree with reservations;________disagree

2. English should be defined as the study of language, literature, and composition--written and oral--and all matters not clearly related to such study be excluded from it.
   _________agree;________agree with reservations;_______disagree

3. The English curriculum should be the result of cooperative planning at the local level by teachers engaged in teaching it, and it should represent a clearly defined sequence of study from grade to grade.
   _________agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

4. Significant data of student's performance (reading records, sample composition, term tests, etc.) should be accumulated in individual folders and passed on from year to yaar to successive teachers or kept in a central location readily available to teachers.
   _________agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

5. Traditional grammar, as conventionally taught, has relatively little effect on writing and is of negligible value in improving oral skill or written composition.
   _________agree;________agree with reservations;_______disagree

6. Grammar rules of English have been an accurate reflection of usage--even of educated people or the best writers.
   _________agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

7. The English teacher must know the facts about usage: that it characterizes social and economic levels, variety of occasion, and cultural attitudes even more that it reflects efficiency or subtlety of communication.
   _________agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

8. It isn't additional writing that's most needed; in fact, in many circumstances an increment may actually be undesirable.
   ________agree;________agree with reservations;_______desagree

9. Expository writing should be given greater emphasis, even when this means some cutback in the time which can be devoted to more personal kinds of writing.
   _______agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

10. High schools with English programs that include a planned sequence in literature and composition will invariably have staff members who disregard the sequence and substitute, instead, their own hit-or-miss teaching preferences.
   ________agree;________agree with reservations;_______disagree

11. The long term paper contributes little, if anything, to writing competence.
   _______agree;________agree with reservations;________disagree

12. A big percent of the writing done by students should be in class under careful teacher supervision.
   ______agree;________agree with reservations;_______disagree

13. Personal conference between teacher and student, or with a very few students, is the heart of the writing experience.
   ______agree;________agree with reservations;______disagree

14. Conferences are so worthwhile that they ought to be managed even at the expense of regular teaching time.
   _______agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

15. Revision, rewriting is essential: it is as simple as that, but one revises a good paper, not a weak one.
   ________agree;_______agree with reservations;________disagree

16. Since writing is the setting down on paper of the ideas that flow in the mind, the more immediately these ideas are set down, the more likely the writing will be coherent; consequently, don't edit while composing.
   ________agree;________agree with reservations;______disagree

17. Writing assignments should be so patterned that the young writer is able to study closely the writing of his own peer group and interest area.
   ________agree;________agree with reservations;________desagree

18. For advancement in writing students need frequent, short writing experiences, subject to the critical evaluation of the teacher.
   ________agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

19. It is entirely possible that what a teacher does for a student before he writes is far more valuable than what the teacher does after the student has finished.
_______agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

20. Since a teacher of composition is the critic and judge of writing, he should write regularly himself and study his own compositions.
________agree;_________agree with reservations;_______disagree

21. To be a successful evaluator of student writing, a teacher should avoid such terms as awkward, unclear, confused, in favor of saying something good about the paper.
_______agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

22. Every English teacher should keep abreast with the so-called "new grammar" by means of reading and course work; in ten years or so it will be upon us.
_______agree;_______agree with reservations;________disagree

23. The complaint by college English teachers about the ignorance of incoming freshmen reflects no credit on the college program because the teachers of those freshmen were taught in their own departments.
_______agree;________agree with reservations;________disagree

24. Improvement in the high school English program depends largely upon the preparation of the teaching staff.
_______agree;________agree with reservations;________disagree

25. The evidence of syllabuses makes clear that too many teachers are letting text books do their curricular thinking for them.
________agree;________agree with reservations;_______disagree

26. The sometimes maligned question-answer method is an essential in teaching criticism because criticism is the process of asking questions and attempting to answer them.
________agree;_______agree with reservations;________disagree

27. The establishment of a system of minimal standards can be damaging if used too soon with beginning writers.
________agree;________agree with reservations;______disagree

28. Hours spent by the teacher in theme correction are completely wasted if his teaching method does not include a re-evaluation of the composition by the student.
_______agree;_______agree with reservations;________disagree

29. Teaching composition is tough!
________agree;_______agree with reservations;_______disagree

WRITING: THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

SOME REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Sister Mary Jacinta Gihl, B.V.M.

If both teachers and students ever come to regard writing as something which can be taught and therefore learned, they will have to divest themselves of any vestiges of the "writers-are-born-not-made" mentality. Perhaps some of us teachers prefer to think we do not subscribe to this theory, but in practice we show by our lack of teaching the techniques of writing that we do, perhaps subconsciously, believe it. How else can we explain such nebulous assignments (so popular in September!) as "My Summer Vacation," which we impose with little or no instructions as to methods of procedure.

Why lament the "finished product" as lifeless, without focus, boring to the reader? It was boring to the writer too...and bewildering. Or why exhibit some precocious child who by a stroke of wit or luck wrote something tolerable? Why present his work to the class with the indictment: This is what I meant that you do. We feel vindicated: after all, ONE person did the assignment "correctly"; and the students, minus one, feel more frustrated than ever, and convinced they haven't the ability to do what we blithely seem to imply "should come naturally". Composition, for our students, becomes an area that is more hopeless than ever. And we secretly come to the same conclusion.

We admit that youngsters can be spontaneous, interesting, vivid in their conversation. What happens to them when they approach a writing assignment? The same boy who kept his boy-friends interested, perhaps even spell-bound, while he described his older brother's antics in a hot-rod doesn't come through on paper. Why not? perhaps there are several tacit reasons in this example. First, talking with his friends, the boy felt at ease. His audience was more interested in what he had to say than in how he said it. Granted, if his "style" were vivid, his observations witty, all the better, but even if he were a little dull, using cliches and gesticualtions to fill the gaps in his ability to express himself, no one would bave objected. Both he and his friends were too interested in the subject to be side-tracked by such unimportant elements. Least of all, were they going to interrupt his flow of talk by correcting his usage or syntax. Ergo, this is the first lesson we teachers can learn. We must give a child the freedom to express himself with impunity.

Faulty sentence structure, spelling errors, incorrect punctuation, even triteness, are extremely minor matters. Errors in mechanics can be eliminated in proofreading and development in originality and precision will come if we do our job as teachers of composition. It is ideas that matter; what a child has to say has to be accepted before he feels free enough to express himself in print as easily as he does in talk. His friends treat his ideas with respect, his teachers sometimes do. Another point: his friends do not say, "Describe this hot-rod to us in 500 words, please." He can stop talking when he's satisfied that he's said what he wanted to say.

Secondly, the boy had an audience, someone who was interested. In writing, this same situation is a requisite. Who will the audience be? It should be someone he wants to talk to. Many times this could be his classmates or even his teacher and classmates. But the student must feel he is writing for someone (not for a red-pencil or a waste-basket). Manufacturing an artificial or bizarre audience is not a solution; it would merely be another impediment to genuine expression. This is an aspect of the writing situation that requires thoughtful investigation.

Thirdly, he was talking about something he knew and related to. Why do we continue to assign subjects that are suitable only for research papers, or banal, irrelevant topics, and expect a child to grow enthused and work up a desire to expend the time and energy that is required for good writing?

The fourth point I'd like to make concerns vocabulary. The boy in question is familiar with the terminology peculiar to the situation he is describing. He has the teen-age idiom at his command and if he fails to think of the word he wants, he can always resort to gestures and the standard, "Well, you know what I mean..." In writing, these devices are not practicable.

Let's suppose an idyllic situation: a youngster is given a writing assignment to which he can really relate, a genuine audience situation is set up or implied, he has a real desire to communicate, he has been given help with the steps preliminary to writing, yet the composition he turns in might still be pretty woeful. Why? Well, perhaps the student knows what he wants to write, has organized his materials, and hurdled the difficult problem of how to begin; he still faces one of the thorniest problems in writing. How should he express himself so that others can really see what he is trying to show them? And perhaps the problem, ultimately,, is not so much how can he get others to "see" as how can he get himself to "see" what he is trying to express.

If the student had no clear vision of what he wants to say, ertainly his reader will have none. So a problem inherent in all writing is this ability to "see" reality and then record this "vision" in concrete terms. It is well and good to free a youngster to write and develop in him a desire to write, but if he hasn't got the tools of expression - words - at his command he will become more frustrated than he ever was. You could possibly spade a garden plot by clawing the earth with your fingers but it would be exhausting and ineffective. So, in clothing ideas in written form a child needs a vocabulary adequate to his needs, and a sensitivity to words, and some training in observation.

How to do this? I believe the Northwestern Lessons in Composition make a forthright attempt to teach composition by placing descriptive writing as the initial step in teaching the writing process. Description is an integral part of all the other forms of writing, so to isolate it and teach it beginning with the elements inherent in descriptive writing: observation and analysis and then the recording of sensory experiences seems to be a judicious attack on the problem of how to teach composition. Another sensible aspect of the program is that children are not required to write "papers". Words, phrases, sentences, very short pieces, are adequate to the purpose. These are, after all, exercises, and no one, more especially a beginner, will exercise to the point of exhaustion with muscles that are not yet attuned. We can wait for longer pieces, and, I suspect, they will come sooner, using this method. The exercises cited later in this paper are merely supplementary to the Northwestern lessons (and, I hope, not contradictory) in recording sensory impressions.

Therefore, the rationale for the exercises I suggest is based on the assumption that even if children feel free to write, and are writing about experiences which are meaningful to them, they still need training in observation and require an adequate vocabulary to express themselves.

The suggestions I make are not meant to be lessons in vocabulary-building but rather a kind of "sensitizing" process aimed to make the children more aware of the need for precision in their choice of words. Obviously, not every vocabulary need of a child could possibly be anticipated and it certainly would be an artificial and stilted program to attempt to do this. What I am aiming at is to develop "awareness" of what is "seen" and consciousness of the apt word to describe it. This, then is not an isolated study of words, per se, because students are using them in concrete, brief, writing situations. I do not believe this will lead to "word intoxication" if the teacher places an emphasis on accuracy of observation, making clear he is not trying to elicit "picturesque" speech.

Let me anticipate an objection. Using the exercise on describing texture in fabrics, the children might use their dictionaries and gain some help from the synonymies. They might next check with Soule's Dictionary of English Synonyms. They will come across many entries which will not apply. Some of these words will not even be recognizable to them, but I don't think this experience will be traumatic. (Anyway, a teacher will use discretion and perhaps your group of junior high students will or will not be able to use this.) If a group, in discussing the texture of burlap, for instance, look for entries under rough and choose to submit "unpolished", the validity of such a word could be challenged by a simple antithesis: polished - unpolished. Is burlap ever polished? What could exist in a polished or unpolished state? Wood? A diamond? Someone's "manners"? There are many ways they can test words which interest them, both you and they will find them. And there is no need to use every word in a list.

There is no sequential arrangement in these suggestions but I have separated them into what could be called three levels of difficulty. Obviously, they can be improved, adapted and extended in various ways.

All these exercises pre-suppose that the children are working in small groups, discussing and debating their observations. They should try to draw upon their own knowledge first, but they should have the necessary references to aid them: dictionaries, a thesaurus, or a dictionary of synonyms such as Soule's Dictionary of English Synonyms (paperback, Bantam, &.95). Each group should report to the class and share and evaluate each other's ideas. They should keep a record of their findings in the form of simple charts, index card files, etc.

Writers are made, not born, and although creativity is innate, it can be nurtured. Our students have so much potential which both we and they have not yet discovered. They have experiences to draw upon which will provide them with ample material for writing. If their imagination and powers of observation have become considerably jaded by the time they have reached the junior high school, perhaps the novelty of a new approach might hopefully stimulate them to a new consciousness and wonder at their world.

This approach might seem too pragmatic but one has to learn basic steps before he can perform any process successfully and writing is a tremendously complicated process.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO RECORD SENSORY IMPRESSIONS

Level 1

1. Ask the children to bring to class pieces of different types of cloth. (You can get samples from drapery stores, rug sample books, and interior decorator's out-moded sample books.) In handling these materials, they should try to discover as many apt words as they can to describe the texture of the cloth they are working with. From the simple designations of texture as being rough or smooth they should try to be as specific as possible. A piece of burlap could be described as rough, prickly, scratchy, coarse. There are many extended activities which could be used at various times. e.g. From the adjectives they have chosen to describe burlap they could discuss what other items could be described with these words. They might compose similes or metaphors. They could compose sentences. They might think of a situation such as a boy in a sack race at a picnic, and describe him hopping along with the rough fibres of burlap scratching his bare legs. If he fell, how oould the coarse material feel against his skin?

2. Get sample cards from a paint store. Ask the children to find a word to accurately describe the color. From the known "ad" names: lime-green, avacado green, perhaps they could try some new combinations just as the advertisers do. They must be able to justify their choice.

3. Have a child walk across the room. Try to describe the way he walked. Ask another child to walk in a different way. Describe it. Do this as many times as it seems fruitful.

4. Describe the smell of a scorched blouse or shirt, the taste of different brands of toothpaste, the feel of finderpaint, etc.

5. Beg, borrow or steal materials from the science department such as slides, films, filmstrips. Show these and have your pupils describe colors, shapes, designs, etc. Fish, birds, flowers, animals, cloud formations, etc. Movies which show a flower opening (using slow motion techniques) are good. Microscope slides of spirogyra, different fungi growths, a fly's wing, fibres, are an amazing world of color and design.

6. Tape record a number of sounds (or get a record from the library). Knocking at a door, ringing of a bell, a whistle, a dog's bark, the laughter of a child or an adult. Have the children identify the sound and describe it.

7. List some of the sounds you can hear at a football, basketball, volleyball game. (or bowling, etc.) Use a phrase which includes an adjective to describe the sound.

8. Describe the sensations you feel when stroking a cat's fur. (Or dog, or any other animal)

9. Compose original similes for:
as big as　as tall as　as round as
as hard as　as cold as
as sweet as　as sour as
as loud as　as soft as
as fresh as　as stale as

Then compose a sentence:
The moon was as round as...

10. List examples of trite phrases:
bright as a dollar
hungry as a bear
cold as ice
a dreary day.

Discuss why these are so ineffective. Consider a person or object or place you could describe, and see how you could make these and other worn-out phrases you can think of more specific and original.

11. Begin with a simple statement such as:

The boy walked down the street.

Take the generic term walked. Make a list of more specific words to describe exactly how the boy walked. Next take the word boy and do the same. Try to arrive at specific nouns and verbs; avoid excessive modifiers.
Think of other sentences which leave you with a vague impression. Have groups trade the sentences they have thought of, and work them out using specific nouns and verbs.

Level 2

1. Describe your "dream" car, house, clothes, etc. Have your description so clear we can close our eyes and "see" it. (This could be a group project, or children can work alone if they wish.)

2. Get a series of postcards: e.g.,Chicago's skyline at night, Buckingham Fountain at night, etc. Find postcards of the same scenes during the day. Have the children describe the first set, then the second. Then write a comparison of the scene as it appears during the day and at night.

3. Describe a bonfire. Describe the colors in the flame, the sound of the flames, the movement of the flames, the smell of the smoke, the burning leaves.

4. Describe a "hot-rod" turning a corner.

5. Write a description of your favorite snack. Make it so "mouth-watering" we will all feel pangs of hunger.

6. Show a science film which shows a spider in action; spinning a web. Describe the pattern of the web, tell how the spider worked to design it. Describe the spider itself. (This would be a good time to read sections of "Charlotte's Web" by E.B.White.)

7. Describe a Thanksgiving dinner. Try to appeal to all the senses. Begin with phrases, then try to work out a short piece of writing together. Pretend you're a T.V. cameraman "zooming in" for a close-up. What will be central? the turkey?? What will be peripheral?

8. Describe people in a circus: clowns, acrobats, tight-rope walkers. Describe a tight-rope walker. Try to appeal to as many senses as you can. Further, you could tell us about the personal feelings of the performar.

9. Describe the sound and sight and smell of bacon frying in a pan. Begin with the raw strips of meat. Finish with the bacon ready to serve.

10. List all the sensory impressions you experience when going into a bakery. Pretend you see a few people there. What are they buying? Why are they attracted to it?

11. If you were writing a suspense story that takes place in a "haunted" house how would you describe the house so that your reader's spine would tingle?

12. How will (name of street) look 25 or 50 years from now? Write a description of how you think it will look.

13. Get a photograph of a tough-looking "alley-cat". Have the children describe him through the eyes of (select one or two)
    - a perfumed Angora cat
    - a pedigreed poodle
    - a comparable type of tom-cat
    - a mother bird
    - a dog (any breed) that is old
    - a woman: cat-hater or cat-lover

an 8 year old boy
a teenager, girl or boy
a beatnik
a mouse

14. This might be a bit too sophisticated for an 8th grader but they would surely have fun trying to do this and might come up with something very good.

Design

His eyes looked over the figure again. He saw the firm, smooth lips; the slender, long neck; the slim well-proportioned, curving body. He never realized that there could be such design in a coke bottle.

by a student of Taft High School
(thanks to Mrs. Hansen)

15. Describe a hot dog that has been roasted over an open fire. What is the appearance of the skin, what color is it? Describe the smell. Imagine yourself biting into it. How does it taste?

Level 3

1. All of these are short pieces of description focusing on a single action, a "moment in time."
Last year one boy in my class did this:

> Ken sat forward on the drugstore stool and leaned toward his plate. He urged his fork through the yellow brown pile of pancakes, cut off a section and steered it through the heavy syrup at the rim of the dish. He brought the morsel to his mouth in a quick, up-bound motion, then repeated the process: cutting, transporting, chewing.

There are flaws in this but it is an attempt to really see what is going on. It does try to create a single impression and the modifiers do not impede the flow of thought.

2. Pretend you are setting up the ball for a critical shot in basketball or volleyball. Describe your actions and your feelings. (Use 1st or 3rd person.)

3. Describe a girl or boy poised on the diving board, ready to dive. Describe the dive, the impact when he hits the water.

4. Imagine yourself sitting on the bleachers at a football game on a cold fall day. Describe how you would feel. Make us feel as you do, using as many sensory impressions as you can think of.

5. Describe what you do to get yourself up in the morning, or your feelings about getting up in the morning. Or, pretend you're lying in bed, gathering the courage to get up, describe what you see and feel and do.

This is an excerpt from one boy's writing:

> I toss and turn dwosily in bed, keeping time to the dreary beat of my alarm clock. I am suddenly jerked to reality by the loud bell of the alarm. It's five o' clock and time to start on my daily Chicago Tribune route. I try to pull myself away from the warmth of my bed, but like a suction cup the bed holds me back. It's a right jab to the top sheet, a left elbow to the pillow, a lurch against the guard rail, and I'm up.

6. Describe yourself in the act of squeezing toothpaste onto the brush. Appeal to our senses of sight, taste and touch in this description. (Perhaps you have a peculiar way of squeezing the past from the tube. Do you press from the bottom, the moddle, or the top? Do you screw the cap back? Do you apply the paste to the brush in a certain pattern? Do you hum or yawn as you're doing this? Make us REALLY SEE).

7. Describe a monkey peeling a banana. Is someone watching him? Does he react to them?

8. Take four imaginary trips through the park: during spring, summer, winter, autumn. Describe the same area under these different seasonal changes.

> (One girl did this using her feet as a "focus"., the various sounds she made walking over the slushy spring mud, the sharp tape of her heels over the sun-baked stones in summer, the rustling sound of leaves under her feet during autumn, the crunching of snow under her feet during winter.)

9. Describe the feeling of snow blowing against your face. The feel of snow under your feet. Do the same with rain. Mud between your fingers and toes back in the days when you made mud pies. Sand on the beaches in summer between your toes and on your wet body. Try to weave into the description your reactions, feelings, memories.

10. Look for appeals to the senses in the ad writing for soft drinks, foods, clothes, cars, etc. Pretend you are writing the advertising. Think of a caption to go with the picture, or write a T.V. commercial, or a parody to a modern song, or a dialogue etc.

11. Suppose you were writing a story of pirates for 4th or 5th graders, how would you describe the pirate captain? Now examine this description, could you use it as it stands if this story were to be given to the 1st and 2nd graders?

12. Perhaps you'd like to take a scene from the American History which you are studying this year. Concentrate on a clear description: vivid and detailed. Describe the people, their reactions to each other, the physical background. Capture them as you would in a photograph. Who will you focus on? Make us feel we are there. First, perhaps, you'd like to find this type of description in historical fiction. There are some good models in -

    Johnny Tremaine by Esther Forbes
    April Morning by Howard Fast
    Across Five Aprils by Irene Hunt
    Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth Speare

    Do you know of others?

13. Bring to class examples of literery passages which are good in sensory detail. Analyze and evaluate them. Have the children bring passages they think are good from books and magazines and newspapers.

14. Analyze poetry to see the deep and extensive use the poets make of sensory images. If your class has not had many experiences with poetry do not use this as an initiation to poetry study!

    (Many of the foregoing exercises could be worked out in poetic forms as extended activities.)

Materials developed by John Tresnor for sensory perceptions are very good.

Many good ideas in Myers and Torrance's books on creativity published by Ginn just recently. Invitations to Speaking and Writing Creatively, Plots, Puzzles and Ploys, and Invitations to Thinking and Doing. (All paper bound)

Read Magazine, Practical English, Cavalcade contains much material that can be adapted for use in the junior high school writing classes.

Last March a girl, Conny Chase, wrote this piece. I think it embodies the kind of specific sensory detail we'd like to find in more of the children's writing. (see next page.)

ON MY OWN

Finally Monday arrived, the day on which I was first allowed to select a pair of shoes on my own. The previous day between Masses at church, pair after pair of snappy-styled and pretty colored shoes seemed to take my eyes with them until they disappeared into the church. Tick-tack, tick-tack in the vestibule sounded a lovely black patent leather pair and the buckles were just right on them. At the Holy Water font there was a cute ballerina pair in pastel pink that had a large straw purse to match. Even though my eyes were lowered in reverence on my return from the Holy Communion rail, a dazzling pair of white kid pumps with dainty cut-outs around the top caught my eye. The devil was certainly distracting me!

Somehow I managed to wait until bus time the next day to begin my very grown-up venture. Riding on that bus had always been such fun, but this time it seemed to take so long for the trip to town.

I can still feel the pounding of my heart as I entered the ladies shoe store. Having seen so many adorable pairs in the lovely display window, made my mind swim with anticipation. Trying to look very mature, I explained my mission to the clerk and was seated. I could tell by the expression he wore, after finding out the correct size, that he felt his job would be difficult this time.

My first choice was a teenage heel. But as I tried to get my balance, my feet swiffled back and forth as my knees knocked together. I guessed those were off the list. Next we gave a cute Italian design a try, but they were cut so low that in no time they would have been dragging as I walked. A plain blue low-heeled set looked just right to be worn with my Easter suit, but wouldn't you know, the pair in the window was the only one left and it was one of the smaller sizes. After the fifth try of my choice, it was obvious that that store had nothing to please me.

Well, what would I do? The shoes that didn't fit I did like, and the shoes that did fit I didn't like. So after thinking it over I decided to thank the clerk for his patience with me and I told him I would come next day with my mom.

(This is unedited except for typographical errors!)

(This was a memory piece which grew out of a discussion of Easter shopping.)

APPROACHES TO THE WRITING PROCESS - GRADE 7

Elsie McAvoy

Many of our "tried and true" ideas of teaching composition have obviously failed in teaching effective writing--writing that has accurate details, good imagery, and a message for an audience. Maybe it is time for some changes in the teaching of the writing process. Let us examine some new devices that may work for junior high students. And I use the junior high in this paper because I am working with seventh grade students at this time.

There are some specific ideas about writing that junior high students need to be made aware of. The goal should be to keep this curriculum as flexible as possible in order to fit the material to the students rather than the student to the material. To be effective the teacher needs enough leeway within the material to exercise her own judgment in meeting the needs of her particular class. Creativity should be important in the composition curriculum--not creativity in just the narrow sense of writing poetry and imaginative fiction but creativity in its broadest sense, involving honesty and involvement in all areas of language and thought.

Writing, taught separately from grammar and usage, must start with the word. To encourage this creativity in writing, we emphasize playing with words and building on words to form short ideas and eventually better, longer ideas. Let the student choose a thing that is familiar to him or give him a name of an object in the room: book, desk, shelf. As the students have time to "play" with the word, seeing and observing a particular book, desk, or shelf, ask for several descriptive words. Put them on the chalk board or dispplay some of the better descriptive modifiers on a bulletin board. A great deal of discussion should be emphasized to encourage the students to express themselves freely and to examine their thoughts. Pictures could be used here--they could describe a certain object from this type of visual aids. Soon they will begin to see how specific they must be in order to communicate effectively with their classmates, their audience in this case.

After the students have worked with some visible success on the single word, have them choose a suitable action word appropriate to this particular thing. Have them create an image for the audience. Pictures on the bulletin board depicting a boy running, skipping, hopping, ambling, or jumping show he does more than just walk. An automobile jerks, speeds, stops, or crashes. An animal tumbles, growls, eludes, or sleeps. An old cliche seems apt here--students retain more of what they see than what they hear. This exercise also helps to develop vocabulary. By insisting on action words each student can create a different image for his audience.

The students love to play games with words. One or two persons leave the room while the rest of the class describes an action or a person. After the student returns to the room, have several of the descriptions read aloud. Can the person guess what happened or who is being described?

Let each one describe this action in his own words: "Bill dropped a long, red pencil on the floor." Answers will vary from "he dropped something" to a very accurate picture of what actually happened. Mr. Gordon, in his book Writing and Literature in the Secondary School, said that the students can gain perception by this type of observation. The more specific each can be, the better the writing can be. Developing some good short descriptive phrases makes the student more comfortable in the writing process. Be sure to compliment work that shows thought and specificity.

Now we need to put this process into practice in a longer idea. We hope that the students' natural inclinations (encouraged by a receptive teacher and a stimulating environment) would lead to more mature and probing insights into the materials available. I believe that the keeping of a personal journal, diary of thoughts, feelings, and impressions can be of continuing value in providing concrete details to work with. A brief period of free writing every day can encourage and help the student to become more adept at expressing himself in words.

Students begin to show a new interest in words at this grade level. They can best write about their personal experiences and their reactions to the world about them. As they have more experiences and opportunities, they have more ideas to structure into specific and concrete details. Teachers should provide ample opportunities for sharing these ideas. The class needs to be made aware of an audience and to be able to convey a meaning to them. Good may convey one image to a peer and an entirely different image to his mother. This type of awareness is what I mean.

As students try to develop these longer ideas, let them imitate good models of professional writing. An abundance of good and exciting literary passages of descriptive and narrative writing should be available to them in the hope of helping each student to develop a sense of taste or at least an awareness of what good writing is. To set up these models for students to examine at their leisure, the teacher should have developed some system that is easy for them to use. A card file, divided into three or four sections; descriptive, narrative, and expository, could be used. In each section of the file have five or six examples of each kind of writing. Let the students examine these types before they try to do some on their own. Using their literature books as a source, have them pick out particularly good passages illustrating a type of writing. All these learning activities will create an awareness of what we want the students to do.

Pinpointing the best way to teach a writing process is impossible. There is no easy answer. Saying one method works better than another method is opinion or what has probably worked best for you in your classroom situation. These methods will vary and change from class to class. Now is the time for some experimentation and re-examination of ideas. If we come up with even one better, more effective way to help our students write, we have been more successful than before we tried them.

SENSE PERCEPTION: PRELUDE TO CREATIVE WRITING

Sister Ruthmary Powers, H.M.

"Creative thought must precede creative writing" is a truism to which most English teachers will agree. What, though is necessary to produce creative thought? Contrary to popular opinion, creative thought must flow through some form. What is most necessary in such thought and writing is that the child has previously been taught how to observe and perceive. To be creative a child must be aware, that is, he must be able to experience his language and articulate his experience in a way that is meaningful to him. Therefore, to be aware in this case would be to have facility in the use of and functioning of language to express, and, indeed, experience a view of life.

The following activities help pupils question themselves on what is perceived in the world at large. These simple sense perceptions are necessary for any deeper consideration of the environment.

For example, in the poem below, Jeff has looked long and hard at a picture of a Mexican woman selling vases. The colors in the picture are dark. Jeff has accurately described the picture, but because he has really seen it, brings his own unique vision to the poem:

DARK NIGHT

There was a lady and a child and vases to sell.
The moon and stars were out.
The candle was burning away.

A lady walked by with a gray and white shawl and dress.

There were all kinds of vases. Some were white and
gray. I wonder how they got that way.
(Jeff, age 11)

Wonder is natural to children but must be stimilated in order to become productive. The use of pictures, large, colorful, inviting questions, help the pupils to reflect upon and respond to their environment. The five senses provide an excellent foundation for wonder. Answers to questions like, "What do you see?" are enjoyable, yet stimulating. Below are sample answers to the way in which one fifth grade class responded to such questioning. (The excerpts are taken from individual compositions which the children wrote. Each had chosen his own picture to write about by this time. The exercises described in this paper, however, are meant for the class as a group, using one large picture which all can see.

What do you see?	"Some houses are scarlet red, And some as dark as burnt bread."(Gerard, age 11)
What do you hear?	"As he lay in dull silence he could actually hear the flickering candle." (Cindy, age 11)
What do you smell?	"...to sit up in the old, musty attic with the sweet smell of wax melting, would cover up the old, moldy quilt smell." (Cindy)
What do you taste?	"It snowed so hard the gulls could taste it!" (John, age 11)
What do you feel?	"You could imagine feeling the feathers." (Brian, age 11)

The individual reaction to the pictures shown should be listed on the board. To imagine the feeling of feathers or the taste of snow is fine once. However, if not listed, ten others will feel feathers and taste snow and the lesson bogs down (in all those feathers and all that snow!). Also, for the pupils to see the picture with their reactions next to it, focuses their attention of the lesson.

> The last sense, feeling, invited a second, deeper meaning. "It was so lonely here! The wind howled through cracks and made a weird, lonely sound which made it worse. If you were there, the murmuring of the sick, little boy and the squeaking bed could make you cry." (Cindy)

Through this sense the pupils can question themselves on their own emotions and feelings when viewing the picture. Also, the pupil can imagine what feelings are experienced by characters (people and animals) in the picture and relate to them. These responses should also be listed in short phrases on the board under the category of Inner Senses.

Once the pupil has asked himself how do the people, animals, etc. in the picture feel, he is ready to question the why and how of these feelings. Typical questions might be: What happened to the characters to make them feel this way? What will happen to them because of the way they feel? What problems do they face? How can these problems be solved?

For example, in Cindy's story she answers her questions by telling the reader that Kimi is sick and as a result will go blind. She accurately places herself in Kimi's mind when she writes,

> "Gee, I don't want to go blind. I will have no friends!" Kimi thought.
>
> But soon his last faint view of the world came. He fell asleep never to awaken to see. He was alive, but the rest of the world of colors went dead.
>
> His fever went down, but his friends left him. He felt as though he may as well die.! (Cindy)

As is shown in the above, most fifth graders are intrigued not only to ask questions, but also to answer them. Their natural wonder is broadened and deepened through this questioning experience. They are not only looking at pictures, they are learning how to look, to clarify, to see what is present, and to express what they experience in language.

These exercises need not be followed by a writing assignment. However, the children may be enthused enough to want to use their language to tell others about the picture--either in poem or prose form.

Children responding in such a manner should be encouraged to tell about the picture with such clarity that those who have not seen the picture will be able to visualize it. Once this habit is acquired pupils begin to expand their vocabulary independently, searching for ways to be concrete and visual in their description.

Two processes have been involved in this exercise. First, the class has observed and reacted to a picture by questioning themselves on it. Second, they have reconstructed their vision in their own language experience of the situation.

This exercise will be one of value if the child is allowed--encouraged--required to be the one who acts. The teacher stimulates, guides, but does so in the realm of the child's experience helping the pupil to grow in the use of language. To elicit awareness and creativity the teacher must be open to the infinite number of ways children can think. Therefore, there will never be any right or wrong responses, rather there will be more or less creative involvements of the child and the language situation to which he has been exposed.

WHY PIGS HAVE CURLY TAILS
OR
AN EXPERIENCE IN MYTH WRITING

Sister Gertrude Mary Yates

"Why People Have Minds;" "How the Peach Came to Be'" and "Why Leaves Got Their Names"--these are some of the titles of myths my fifth graders wrote last spring. The two weeks of myth writing were weeks of pleasurable and enjoyable writing for both my students and myself. Almost, but not quite standing on a soapbox, I would like to proclaim and share the joys and benefits of myth writing in the classroom. Of note is the fact that the composing of myths takes advantage of the child's more adept skill in narrative writing--a skill which comes with his familiarity through books in the narrative literary conventions.

Beginning the myth writing I used the well illustrated Book of Greek Myths[1] by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire for the basis of a two day presentation on myths, and the children enjoyed this new (for most of them) knowledge about myths. The children and I noted modern references to myths such as the Jupiter and Zeus rockets, the Apollo spacecraft, and the winged foot of Mercury used by the Good Year Tire and Rubber Company. The formation of myths and mythology by the Greeks and Romans in order to explain mysterious and unexplainable to them phenomena was explored, and stressing myths of the explanatory variety, I read them such myths as "The Titans," "Zeus and His Family," and the stories of Prometheus, Pandora, and Orion.

After the second day's class I told the students to think of an idea for their own myth which would be in the vein of how the beaver got a flat tail or why the turtle has a shell. Because of my direction and the appeal of such stories to children, a review of the titles of the children's myths shows that most of their myths turned into Just So Story variations. "Why Cats Have Whiskers;" "How the Skunk Got His Smell;" and "How the Chipmunk Got His Stripes."

On the third class day I had the children develop their plot according to a procedure which was adapted from Eloise Jarvix McGraw's article "Plotting Without Pain" in the June, 1959, issue of The Writer. Using Jacqueline's "How the Zebra Got Its Stripes" as a model, I will give examples of what the children would put in their plotting process. First, the children wrote in sentence or phrase form a short biographical sketch of the main character that gave necessary information prior to the opening of their story. The purpose of the sketch is to help the author establish the identity and personality of a character.

Sarakumph, now known as a zebra. Often injured and killed by its enemies because of its whitish color and tasty hide.
Skungäze, annoyed and worried because of the deaths of his zebra relatives and friends. Determined and full-grown.
A fast running zebra.

Then the children working together step by step answered these six questions about their main character.

(1) What does this person want?
Skungäze wants the killing of zebras to stop.
(2) What prevents his getting it?
The god bf beasts Segs being so busy that he cannot see Skungäze for two years.
(3) What does he do about this obstacle?
Skungäze waits two years and presents the zebras' problems.
(4) What are the results of what he does?
Segs grants Skungäze his request for a means of protection.
(5) What showdown does all this lead to?
Segs paints black stripes on all zebras.
(6) Does he get what he wants, finally, or does he not?
Yes, Skungäze does.

The children had used this plotting method previously for a story about cocker spaniel puppies who had investigated an open paint can and they had liked the process's guidance. Whether the children were aware of it or not, I don't know, but it did give their stories organization, discipline of direction, and the essential element of conflict. But the most important factor of the plotting method was its contribution to the children's writing success.

With the completion of the plotting process, the students began their rough drafts. Also earlier I had posted a list of the Greek and Roman gods and goddesses and their various domains which the children could use if they wished. Some children did, others used their names but assigned the gods and goddesses to areas which they did not belong to. But the majority of the children invented their own gods and goddesses, and they introduced me to the god of eating and the god of plants Leavemouse.

As the children began writing, four basic points were emphasized. Again I will use examples from the children's myths. (1) Use quotations when possible as this gives immediacy and more reality.

"Athena," Prometheus said, "I have given mortals many treasures but how can they keep and remember these treasures?" "Well, I could design a pretty little box for them," said Athena.

Now Prometheus asked Athena how mortals could keep the treasures he had given them. Athena said she could make a pretty box.

(2) Make your narrative explicit and clear.

> "Leavemouse is the kind god of plants. He is one of the younger gods. Seated across from his throne made of ivory was the gentle god of all animals Mamales."
>
> One time at a family discussion in Rome, Vulcan the god of forging said, "I think that mortals should have beards to comfort them in the winter."

(3) Use the five senses, comparisons, images, and show size, shape, and colors.

> In a forest called Judea a merchant named Samson was passing through. All the trees were shining their leaves trying to make them look new. But a tree named Jonas was not shining his leaves anymore. He was too old and his leaves had begun to die three years ago.
>
> Elephant was a huge gray animal with the strength of ten horses. And no wonder, for he was as big as ten horses. His legs were as big as the trunk of a good-sized tree. His head was half the size of his body.

(4) Clearly establish the personality of the main character. Does he have a habit peculiar to him?

> Supersonicalis, the god of speed, had just had a son. But one thing greatly troubled him. His son had inherited his father's speed, but he was curious. And like all curious mortals,he would probably try to climb Mount Big home of the gods.

One of the most appealing characters created by the children is Rebecca's skunk Stinky who is trying to obtain some additional power from the gods.

> "I know," thought Stinky, "the god of Winds will give me the power to run as fast as lightning." But alas he couldn't help Stinky either.
>
> The answer from the gods was always the same. "Sorry, we are fresh out." There were no horns, hooves, poison, speed, sharp teeth, trunks, nor muscles for poor little Stinky.

Throughout the myth writing, I appealed to the children as professional writers and they responded well to this approach for it gave them greater status. In the first writings I stressed that ideas and expression are primary. There is no good writing without rewriting, and authors do and must rewrite their stories and books. Crossed-off actions in the rough drafts indicate good will and good writing since this demonstrates attempts at the correction of weak story parts and a desire for a good story. It is helpful for the students to skip every other line when doing their rough drafts as this gives them ready encouragement and ready room for rewriting. And the children's revisions basically revolved around achieving the specific four writing points described above.

As the children wrote and revised their rough drafts, I told them that they were writing holographs and explained the value of having a manuscript written in the author's own hand. The idea of holographs appealed to the children for it gave their work an added dimension of importance and also probably a term their parents did not know.

During the days of writing, the students often began the class by rereading their own myths and then making any changes or improvements that they might spot before continuing the new writing of the day. In this student rereading I encouraged the children to eliminate any sections or words that did not contribute to the total myth. In the elephant description the ears are described: "and his ears, what huge ears." Referring to the ears only as huge ears would have been sufficient. Also at least one adjective could have been dropped from this sentence: "The dark long-haired warrior giant would often daydream and was very clumsy."

At times I had the students as a group softly read aloud their myths, for the hearing of their stories often aided the children in self-improvement of their myths. Also I asked the students to read aloud their final revisions and their final copies when completed. Students are not yet attuned to hearing the prose rhythm. Hopefully children would note sentences running in these ways: "Apollo didn't want anyone to find out he kill Thor;" "Apollo hadn't finish;" and "There once was a cat named Ollie who was pure black and the sneakiest of all cats."

Another method of student evaluation was the exchange of myths between students at the beginning of the class. The students would write down on a separate slip of paper one good aspect of the myth they were reviewing and suggest if necessary one way of improving the myth. The children might write, "Your god Sheiva is very real to me" or Maybe you could use quotations more to make Zeus more alive." I emphasized the fact that the student evaluator could be wrong, and I would see anyone who wanted to talk about the evaluation they had received. The student suggestion for improvement was not necessary, but the positive recommendation by the student of the other child's work was essential. An author is sensitive and this sensitivity must be recognized in the child writer too.

While the students were writing, I saw each of my fifth graders for a conference about their story. My concern was not for grammar, but for story value. To one fifth grader who wrote "How Chipmunks Got Their Stripes" I suggested that the chipmunk be humanized more and that the god Shieva be more clearly presented. When Maureen showed me her revision, I was delighted and so was Maureen. Here is her completed myth "How Chipmunks Got Their Stripes."

> One day, many, many years ago Sheiva, the god of nature was walking along the shores of the Indian Ocean. Sheiva was old, but still gentle and kind. He had a beard that hung down to his feet and a crown of pure gold, studded with rubies. He was now thinking of his father, who many years ago had been so evil. Now his father was kind, just like Sheiva.
>
> He came out of his stupor when he suddenly saw a small brown chipmunk busily engaged in an impossible task.
>
> "What are you doing, little friend?" asked Sheiva.
>
> "Oh, great god Sheiva, during the night the wind blew down this tree and it fell into the water. In the tree is my nest with my wife and babies. I am trying to dip the water into this hole so I can rescue them."
>
> Sheiva smiled at this devotion, and waving his hand he rolled back the waters. The little chipmunk was joyful at being reunited with his family. He thanked Sheiva, and reaching down the god stroked the little chipmunk's back. At that moment dark brown stripes appeared on his shiny brown back. All of a sudden the chipmunk felt very proud. To this day every chipmunk wears these stripes as a sign of Sheiva's affection.

In seeing the students I followed a procedure suggested by Dr. Walter Loban[2] of the University of California. Slightly modifying Dr. Loban's procedure, I had two chairs placed on either side of my desk for the pupils, and I also stationed two additional pupils to work at the corners of my desk as they awaited their conference turns. When I finished with one student, I turned to the other seated student. In the meantime the student with whom the conference was over consulted a list of the students that I had posted and he notified the next student on the list. The system is both effective and efficient in time use, and during the conferences I looked particularly for the four basic writing points I had listed earlier, and I centered my suggestions around those points. The ideal situation that I tried for was for the student to realize without my pointing it out that quotations might have been used more than in direct quotations or that the skunk Stinky should show his sadness more.

Sometimes during the conference a general problem is found. During the myth conferences I discovered that the students were having some problems with quotations, especially divided ones, and I reviewed the use of punctuation in dialogue.

Of course some students finished their myths more quickly than others. Those finished with writing then drew cover sheets for their tales as the myths were to be assembled in a large book which the children titled Fantastic, Fictional, and Fabulous Myths. Later, after assembling this book, the children drew names to see whose turn it was to take the myth book home. I can still see Cindy's shock and surprise when she drew the name of her chief teaser,Jeff.

After the illustrated cover sheets were drawn, the children who were finished put their names on the chalkboard and exchanged myths with other students who had completed their stories. Also the earlier finishing students brought myth books or other books to read during class, but most of the students finished quite closely to each other.

Evaluations of the children's writing and plot development were written on separate slips of paper since the children would be seeing each other's myths. Again the emphasis was on the positive with some suggestions. A sample evaluation might say, "Maureen, your myth is very clear. From your description I can picture Sheiva well and also the chipmunk. I can especially sympathize with the little chipmunk and be happy with him. A fine myth." Or I might write about "Why People Have Minds"--Karen, your dialogue is excellent. It moves the story along and does not repeat itself. You give Prometheus and Athena real character and I get to know them in the story. You might have mentioned a few specific gifts that Athena and Prometheus put in the humans' minds, for example, addition and subtraction facts and how to sail on the Mediterranean Sea. An excellent myth though."

Before the myths were inserted into Fantastic, Fictional, and Fabulous Myths, the students had Myth Reading Time. Signs proclaiming First Reading of Myths; Original Myths; Room 204 Presents; and World Premiere were posted in the hall and the principal and her secretary were invited to Myth Reading Time. For Myth Reading Time the desks were arranged in circles and the circles were given names such as Apollo Circle and Vulcan Forgers. The students then read the myths in their group and they kept me busy exchanging a myth that had been read in one circle for a myth from another circle. Charioteers were assigned to move the chairs for the principal and secretary to different circles.

Perhaps the best way to typify the students and teacher interest in the myth writings is to relate an incident that occurred probably midway through the myth writing. One afternoon I was startled to see that it was almost time to change classes, and I expressed my disappointment. Immediately the students said, "Let's not change," and they moaned. Someone laughed and said, "We could strike." Of course they had to change classes, but the vital consideration is that the children wanted to stay and continue their writing and this writing interest and enthusiasm prevailed through the two weeks. Myth writing then is a valid and worthwhile experience for it results in student use of their skill in narrative writing, student pride in creation, student skill in relating and discussing with others, and student pleasure in writing.

[1] D'Aulaire, Ingri and Edgar Parin, Book of Greek Myths (Garden City, New York, 1962), Doubleday.

[2] Walter Loban speaking during the winter of 1967 at Royal Oak Kimball High, Royal Oak, Michigan.

CREATIVE POETRY WRITING

Sister Junette Morgan

In this, the Space Age, we are witnesses of dreams become reality. In every avenue of human endeavor progress accelerates and yet, in all too many American classrooms the thrust is snail-paced as an insidious malady is detectable--a malady which is rooted in a negative, or at best, an indifferent attitude towards learning. One serious aspect of this affliction, an "allergy" to writing, is one which we as educators and English teachers can profit by viewing critically, considering the symptoms and pondering effective remedies.

In response to an opinion poll (no names attached) seventh and eighth graders were asked to react honestly and give reasons why they like or did not like English in the classroom. Their negative reasons, summed up, are clues in the "allergy" to writing situation:

"English is dry, dull, boring, long,tiring, formal, uninteresting....we keep going over the same old stuff...the teacher runs everything; we don't get to do enough...the teacher talks too much ...there is nothing exciting about English...what matters except the grade...what good is it...it really doesn't concern me... grammar and all that jazz is beyond me...the same kids come out on top...I don't like my papers all marked up...it gets harder and more mixed up every year...there isn't anything to like about it...I hate the long assignments and all the writing we have to do...I don't like the book..."

If it is true, as researchers tell us, that creativity is our nation's greatest but most wasted natural resource and that every child has a creative potential which, if not killed, is often stunted by the structures and procedures of our current educational system, then it is our responsibility to investigate creativity and its many possible applications, to depart from the traditional in both content and method. As an antidote to such negative attitudes as those listed above, discerning teachers will think creatively, the first step in bringing about a reversal of such attitudes.

One of the avenues richest in possibilities is that of creative poetry writing. Again, there are negative attitudes to be overcome by the time students reach junior high school level, but this can best be achieved indirectly. Often a student reacts negatively to poetry because it is somebody else's poem, somebody else's interest. He could care less about the teacher's ecstasy over the literary merits of a given selection; it strikes no spark in him. He merely immunizes himself against it further, becoming increasingly convinced that poetry is "for the birds."

Or in other cases negative reactions have been nurtured by an overdose of attention to mechanics, to meaningless technical vocabulary, to analysis. And the crowning blow is that of memorization without purpose.

It would seem, then, that a sensible approach to cultivating a love for poetry must eliminate such factors. Children can be exposed to poetry as they are to the sun, gradually and often indirectly. Severe exposure in either case is unwholesome. Hence it seems logical to intersperse attention to poetry throughout the year rather than to concentrate it into a formidable unit.

Since words are the tools through which the ideas must flow, it is a good idea to begin the writing of poetry by a class concentration and pooling of ideas, observations, etc. by listing these on the board. It does not matter that some contributions might be single words while others might be phrases, but it is important that every child have an opportunity to add what he thinks. The teacher assumes the role of "secretary" or "recorder" while the children, as the "thinkers" assume the important role. These steps are vital to success in writing poetry; they help children to particularize and describe observations, lead them to see that any subject has many facets, free them to formulate their own unique expression, and assist them in acquiring a consciousness of words and their function.

The next step is the presentation of some form through which the ideas will flow. One such form is WORD CINQUAIN; even third graders can achieve success in this. Although the ideas do not flow from line to line in this type of poetry, there is an association between the parts and helps children to understand language better.

First line: names topic, one word
Second line: defines or describes topic in two words
Third line: expresses action, three action words or a verb phrase
Fourth line: writer expresses his attitude or opinion of it in four words
Fifth line: a synonym for the topic

The following two Word Cinquain poems were first efforts at writing in this form. They are class compositions, the step which precedes the individual writing.

Autumn
Brilliant, picturesque
Beautifies, brightens, enchants
Patchwork of colorful blankets
Spectacle
-Grade 7B

Halloween
Inky, gripping
Deceiving, terrifying, haunting
Dancing spirits roaming freely
Mystery
-Grade 7A

The following poems are individual efforts at WORD CINQUAIN:

Sunset
Resplendent, unearthly
Sinks, glows, subsides
Forerunner of the night
Twilight
-Paul Vandenberg, Grade 8

Lavendar blossoms
Cluster daintily around
Almost fragile stem
Improving nature's world with
The sweet fragrance of lilacs.
Debbie Cone Grade 8

Spring fever hit me!
I'd like to kiss the sweet earth,
Hug flowers and trees,
Or dance: dance and sing out LOVE
For spring fills my heart with joy!
-Maurine Dufault Grade 8

The March 1966 issue of Elementary English carried an article by Sally S. True on an ancient Korean form of poetry called Sijo (shē-jo). This form of poetry is similar to Haiku in that it does not rhyme, it has three lines, it has a depth of thought in simple language, and it concerns nature, either realistically or symbolically. This form consists of three lines with 14-16 syllables in a line. Each line can be divided into parts with a natural break at the end of the first part. In English, the Sijo usually appears as six short lines rather than three long ones. The following are examples of student Sijo:

He who never cares
Shall I be as the butterfly
And flit from blossom to blossom---
Or shall I be like the oak
Which stands firm against the strongest wind?
-Thomas Regimbal Grade 8

Lacy forms sway in the spring breeze
While dewdrops rest on each flower,
A small bird chirps his joyous song,
A radiant sun shines brightly.
Serene stillness is broken by
Rustling leaves....the woodlands awake!
-Ann Nicklason Grade 8

As the frog leaps and the snake slithers
I feel the sense of magic;
The magic of nature's love and beauty,
Beauty in life and plants.
I am joyful because of LIFE....
Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.
-Marya Newakowski Grade 8

A minor American poet, Adelaide Crapsey, influenced by the syllabic patterns of Oriental poetry, developed a form I have chosen to call SYLLABLE CINQUAIN to distinguish it from WORD CINQUAIN. She used a five line structure in which each line builds in syllables and meaning, something like a crescendo in music. The syllable pattern is 2 - 4 - 6 - 8 - 2. The following poems are student examples of this form:

Daisies...
Yellow flowers
On a lush green background
Lifting tresses to the wind and
Dancing.
-Linda Grob Grade 8

Harken...
With a faint sound
Like the evil in the night
The timber wolf stalks his wary prey
And strikes!
-Paul Stratton Grade 8

Flowers,
Tossing gently
In the warm fresh spring breeze
Bringing beauty to all the earth
Through life.
-Ann Nicklason Grade 8

Greenness,
Ancient in grass,
Majesty in summer,
Color of the ocean and of
Seaweed!
- -Albert Diez Grade 8

Many children fail in poetry writing because they think, erroneously, that rhyme is the important element. Frequently they lose the sense in what they are trying to express and the poem becomes trite in the struggle to rhyme. If children can be led to understand that the essense of a poem lies in the rhythm, the flow af an idea, and in the language used to create certain effects, it is much easier for them to transfer their efforts to rhymed forms of poetry and gain success. One practical way of plunging into this is to have them write two, three, or four lined riddles for younger children at Halloween. Making it purposeful helps older children lose any self-consciousness they may have about the interests of the younger children; this permits a release of all sorts of vivid, imaginative language which carries over long after Halloween is past. The following poems are rhymed form riddles written (and later read) to younger children:

Round and hollow
Yellow and gold,
My fiery eyes
Will leave you cold.
Who am I?
-Peggy Gaven 8th

From head to toe
I'm black and furry,
About the alleys
I howl and scurry.
-Mary Rowe 8th

Cackling sounds echo on high,
Black forms streak across the sky,
Black cats from their broom-
sticks sigh...
Can you guess what's flying by?
-Rhonda Duchemin 8th

Not short, not tall, not fat, not
thin,
I don't have bones, don't have
skin,
They try to catch me, never will,
Because of my invisible skill.
Who am I?
-Mark Saucier 8th

What does Halloween mean to me?
Witches and ghosts and lots of glee!
-Matthew Simek 8th

The curses of my potent brew
Will make your hair turn pink
and blue.
Who am I?
-Jim Walker 8th

Exposure to the world of poetry in some of the ways described herein brings more than just a beginning familiarity with poetic forms. It gives children a sensitivity to their language, a conscious desire to grow in its development, a deeper appreciation of the everyday things about them, an awareness of people and things. It facilitates interest in reading and because of success in writing poetry, the children become more anxious to write in forms other then poetry.

COMPOSING THROUGH TRANSPARENCIES

Patricia Finke

Students in junior high school English classes today are heirs to a limitless wealth of audio and visual aids for the study of their language. No longer need we walk by an English class of eleven, twelve, and thirteen year olds and hear merely the rustle of pages turning, the drone of the teachers' instruction, the voice of a student reciting, or the squeak of chalk on the board.

Now we may enter English classes and hear, along with the students, the voice of Robert Frost "saying" some of his poems. With the students, we may watch a movie or film strip which enriches a real or literery experience they may have had. We might possibly observe some classes viewing an educational T.V. program.

Though not all of us have access to all of the equipment and aids to learning now marketed, it is a shame that more of us do not try to use effectively whatever instructional aids we have in our schools. For instance, when helping students learn to express themselves clearly in writing, a crucial learning area in the English class, I have found one more effective use of the overhead projector, a visual aid whose scope of use in the classroom is vast.

"What are we going to do this morning?" a few voices queried. It was a Friday last winter, and my thirty seventh graders had spotted the overhead projector on my desk as they entered the room. Their curiosity was aroused, as I had hoped it would be. They knew that this morning I planned to return their compositions written earlier in the week. What did that projector have to do with their corrected compositions, they wanted to know?

At my direction, one of the students turned off the lights, another closed the blinds, and most of the others leaned forward in their seats as I put a transparency on the overhead and turned on the machine's light. The bareness of the screen at the front of the room was broken by a composition written by one of the students earlier in the week.

We were beginning our first attempt to discuss in depth something that one of them had written.

Seeing the paragraph before them, they were able to reread sentences and phrases and to comment easily on parts of the paragraph. They, not their teacher, were the judges of the success, the clarity, the effectiveness of the writing. I guided them through their discussion of that anonymous composition for about fifteen minutes. At my suggestion, they concentrated on discussing the ideas in the writing, although some of the students were quick to note ant grammatical or spelling errors, too. We used a special pencil to work with the writing. They offered several suggestions for improvement as well as some praise to the unknown writer. Hopefully, not only would the author of that illuminated piece of writing benefit from the scrutiny, but every other member of that seventh grade class would indirectly gain, also.

On the following Friday morning, we repeated our procedure of examining closely one of their compositions written that week. Most of the class liked the content of that particular writing, and their encouraging remarks prompted the again anonymous author to claim his work openly.

At the suudents' requests, we worked with transparencies of their composing efforts a number of times that winter and spring. As a result, many of the students in the class became fairly adept at revising their own writing to produce thoughts and description more clear and precise than earlier in the year. In short, we think, their composing improved, in part, as a result of our use of the overhead projector.

The overhead, then, is useful in perhaps the most vital area of the study of English. The time taken to prepare a transparency of a composition is minimal, whether the teacher makes a transparency of the child's own writing or types in large print a copy of the child's writing. Either way, the child knows that his ideas and means of expression are up for consideration by his peers. He wants to succeed in saying something. The use of transparencies to share a student's writing with the class is just one simple but far-reaching way to tap that growing wealth of audio-visual aids for use in the English classroom

GRAMMAR?

What about grammar in the English program? Does it belong? Is it necessary? Where, if at all, would it fit? What relationship could it have to the literature and composition program? These are but a few of the questions which concerned people in the English field have been asking.

It seems to me that grammar is needed as a part of the language Arts program and is closely related to the teaching of literature and composition. No correlation between grammar teaching and sentence improvement has been proven, or at least only a very minor effect can be proven. I think it is for this reason that many of us question the need for grammar in the English program. For years we have been trying to push a Latin grammar into our students with very little success. Is this lack of success the fault of the content or of the method? I suggest that it is both. How could a Latin grammar hope to fit the English language? In addition, I think that the very definition of grammar-- the underlying structure of a language--makes it impossible to place it as a separate body of principles to be learned and instead makes it an approach to understanding.

Both literature and creative compositions are made up of words, as are most of the forms of communication. These words are combined into sentences. For years we have been defining a sentence as a complete thought, and although we can't explain what a complete thought is, we intuitively transcribe our ideas into complete units containing words. Good writers use more of a word than the reader can see. That is, every reader can identify with a great creative work because the artist says more than is on the surface. He does this intentionally by selections. We must, therefore, in order to understand the complex relationships in a work, the act of composition, and the meaning and form of sentences, take a closer look at the work of art--poem, essay novel, or story. We gain understanding by these closer looks, and we paraphrase or interpret the work in light of our past experiences and store of knowledge. This is where grammar comes into literature. Interpretation begins with understanting sentences to see why author-artists wrote the way they did when so many alternatives were open to them. He has selected words, structures and forms to create a whole work of art.

If we think of these selections as used by poets, we can see perhaps how grammar can help with the understanding of a simple haiku poem. In a haiku poem the deep structure is very close to the surface structure because of the selectional process. The poet creates an image which gives the impression of simultaneity of experience by omitting all but the bare essentials which must be presented in a sequential linear form in order to give the intended impression.

The mists come;
the mountains fade and vanish;
the tower stands alone.

How do we understand this haiku?

1. The tower stands alone when the mountains fade and vanish as the mists come.
2. With the coming of the mists, the mountains fade and vanish and the tower stands alone.
3. When the mists come, the mountains fade and vanish causing the tower to stand alone.
4. The mists come causing the mountains to fade and vanish causing the tower to stand alone.
5. The original.
6. Etc.

The poet selects words from the deep structure which signals interrelationships, and also signals that this is not prose but his poetic way of capturing a moment, an emotion, an insight. The reader must supply his own knowledge and understandings here. We must teach the readers, not only to supply these understandings to works already created, but to create their own works.

Notice how much this nine year old knows intuitively, and how much you--the reader--understand and supply intuitively.

Silent logs floating
Statue still--
Sly vicious animal, a sinister monster.
Regiments of scaly armored troops
Drifting down the river
Hot, damp, steamy jungles.
A brute of a creature
Flesh-eater, killer.
Icicle teeth, in a huge dark abyss.
A crocodile.

Note that there are no complete sentences. See how much is needed to be supplied by the reader. The only problem is in the seventh line which implies information not possible to recover--it requires guesswork; no deep structure is supplied in the information given in the poem.

If a nine year old can write like this where does the teaching come in? With help, this child and all our writers will be able to talk about their weaknesses, their successes and failures. Insightful-intuitive students should be given tools to go further and those less insightful should be given a chance to discover the possibilities of their language. Intuition needs to be brought to a conscious level.

I have mentioned several times about deep structure; let me here back track and explain this term. Probably the most effective way of doing this would be by an example. Let's look at this sentence: THE SUN MADE A SHADOW. We could say that there is no problem understanding this sentence but a closer look shows how complex the process of understanding it really it. First the meaning of the verb: does made mean "caused" or "created"? "Created" would be metaphorical because it requires an animate subject. What we are saying is this: THE SUN SHONE. But we assume that: THE SUN SHONE ON SOMETHING. THE SOMETHING CAUSED A SHADOW TO BE CAST ON SOMETHING. Or: THE SUN SHONE ON SOMETHING CAUSING THE SOMETHING TO CAST A SHADOW ON SOMETHING. From these we get the following choices:

1. The sun shone on something causing a shadow.
2. The sun shining on something caused a shadow.
3. The sun caused something to cast a shadow.
4. The sun caused (or made) a shadow.

It is here that judgement, taste, style come into play, and it is here that the writer makes a choice. Understanding the process provides the writer with a choice. Many of these understandings are intuitive, but bringing them to the surface in this way makes it possible for them to be articulated.

This process of articulation is important if we are to communicate our experiences to others. I here present two examples of student compositions. The first is a sixth grade boy whose IQ is about 80, and who reads on the second grade level. I have transcribed the paragraph as he wrote it so that you can see the difficulties he has with verbal skills such as word sounds in connection with spelling, but notice the sentence complexity and the thoughts which he has expressed.

> When kites up in the air cost together is seem that their alive. Like the jet kite saying to the box kite watch me do a flip, then you see your kite flipping around. And the box kite tail is going back and forth like he claping for him. But then your all dun fliing for the day and put them away and at night if you stay awake after everybody gone to bed you listen you can hear noise like the to kite making what their going to

do tomorrow.

The following paragraph is from a fifth grade girl of average intelligence. Would that some high school students could write with this much competence.

> Two weeks ago on Saturday my mom packed a picnic lunch and my whole family and I went fishing at Alum Creek. We had five poles, one for everyone in our family, but we only used three of them. My father was baiting the hooks while my mother took out a cloth and laid it on the ground. Dad happily pushed poles into the dirt and closely watched the bobbers. Jane, Karen and I went into the woods for awhile until we heard our mother's voice calling for us. We hurried back and found a chocolate cake beside a hill of sandwiches. We had Kool-ade to drink and potato chips. We fished for a little while after that, but soon started packing the plates and cups. We all sang songs on the way home as we remembered how nice our parents were to have taken us on this wonderful trip.

As a conclusion let me say that we don't want to make linguists of our children but we must give them the tools to express and articulate the ideas and experiences which are so important to them.

WANTED: "INSTANT CREATIVE TEACHING"

FOR GRADES 7 & 8

Sister Lorraine Crawford

The week-end was a blur. The plan book is a blank! The eighth grade class, a few brief hours away is about to advance toward the portals of Room 14. Where is the unsullied one who dares to say this has never been her fate? God save the.....CREATIVE TEACHER!! The march of loyal subjects is fast approaching, all powers are tensely called to order. The powers are garbed in florescent bands, inscribed with a stark "F.O." This vanguard of the CREATIVE TEACHER, is tremulous. Gone "by-the-board" is her lesson preparation, while her neglect is a fault for which she might pay the price. Ironically it is the price of slavish despondance upon her treasured powers of flexibility and originality. During such a time, a psychological impasse must be hurdled....and fast. No mourning for neglect! Just leap and bound swiftly into one's cavern of creativity and PRODUCE! Yes, produce a vibrating class output of CREATIVE WRITING..............with no prepared lesson plan.

To the scrupulous, this advice will be a travesty of the polished profession of teaching. To the scrupulous I boldly say, "Beware! You are not CREATIVE enough to envision such a situation of reality." To my fellow-teachers I cry, "Bon jour, mes amis" and speedily pursue my suggestions for "instant creativity." An "instant creative teacher" can be a flop! But only without the security of her "F.O." status. It seems, according to studies of Morris Stein of the University of Chicago, that creativity must be a product of judgment. But more so creativity is a product or art that is judged as creative by others. The Monday morning teacher could easily be devoid of lesson plan and corpuscle strength but creativity presupposes an underground spring of judgment, the judgment flexible to choose an assignment both original and creative for the writer. A composition teacher can never be possessed of these invaluable gifts unless skillful writing techniques were conscientiously developed throughout her career. The "recipes" below are forbidden to lazy, loop-hole teachers. They are the kindly fare for dedicated teachers who have walked into a week-end of total distraction. Instructor magazine recently told that "performing in a highly creative way within the area of human activity necessitates the use of certain skills and knowledge." A creative teacher is not a "trickster." By definition her skill must be disciplined before depending upon her emergency output of originality, plus flexibility.

The following list of "instant creative writing" is meant to be tucked into the last page of the plan book, refuge spot for the dazed teacher. I plea for more writings on "instant" academic subjects, for this same creative teacher must muster her courage anew and face the ensuing day, to meet a barrage of unprepared math, science and history classes....the fruit of a blurred weed-end. Again I repeat, this list is compiled ONLY for use by:

1. The conscientious teacher
2. The teacher who has undergone an "emergency, blurred week-end."
3. The teacher who is realistic enough to know that someday she will be bereft of prepared creative writing material for students. Presuming dedication, some holiday hours could be spent duplicating emergency materials listed below.

The following group is a selection of interesting topics, some of which could be jotted on board by the teacher or dittoed on individual papers. These topics are excellent to relate personal experiences in the 1st person. To create the proper audience for the writer, tell students that the experience will be read aloud in front of the class.

(1)

I SHOUD HAVE STAYED HOME TODAY
QUIET THINGS IN MY LIFE
A FRIEND WHO HELPED ME GROW UP
MY MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT
SOME SOUNDS GRATE ON MY NERVES
MY PRIZE POSSESSION
THE STRANGE PUNISHMENT I GOT WHEN...1st TIME I TRIED TO RUN AWAY
THAT SILLY THING WHICH, I THOUGHT AT THE TIME, WAS PERFECTLY SENSIBLE.
WHAT I HOPE TO BE IN 10 YEARS (Discuss individual students; cite their potential strength for certain vocations; list on board.)

(2)

These lessons develop a writer in his use of either 1st or 3rd person writing skill.

WHAT IS CHEATING?
THE EFFECTS OF CHEATING
WHAT CAUSES CHEATING?
MY DOG LOOKS AT LIFE
DESCRIBE TOP DRAWER
DESCRIBE CLOSET
A WASTEBASKET REMINISCES
THE MIRROR ON MY DRESSER SPEAKS

(3)

Discussion on the meaning of an "analogy" should preceed this lesson.

ANALOGY THEME

A TREE AND A MAN
A RIVER AND LIFE
A FOOTBALL AND LIFE
A PIECE OF CLAY AND A CHILD

(4)
ANONYMOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Define "anonymous." Each student is asked to write his autobiography. This should be done in a brief manner. One catch! Students may use the word "I" no more than two times. At the end of the writing period, papers are collected, shuffled by the teacher and then passed out at random. Individual students may come up to read the autobiography they received. Class guesses the identity of the writer. Prizes are given for the autobiography which is written in the most clever manner. To add to this lesson, students may bring in their baby pictures. An attractive bulletin board can be displayed with baby picture stapled on the ananymous autobiography.

(5)
SENSE COLLECTION

Students list 10 things they would want to:

HEAR
TASTE if there were the possibility they
TOUCH would lose that sense next year
SMELL
SEE

After completion of the lists, students could write an essay on any one of the items, telling why they chose that sensual experience over all the others which were listed.

(6)
PARENT PLAN

The admirable qualities of each parent could be discussed and then described in writing. A second paragraph could be developed stating the ways in which the student feels he is similar to each of his parents.

(7)
PARAGRAPH PAPER PASS

Divide students into groups of 5 or 6. One piece of notebook paper is given to each group. No.1 student in each group writes a creative beginning sentence. Each student in the group takes his turn writing a creative sentence contribution. "Paper pass" could continue for two rounds. A leader of each groups reads the completed composition of his group aloud. A prize is given to the group voted as the best creative composers.

(8)
AUDIENCE-CREATION WRITING

"A youth and a man were killed and three teenagers seriously injured early today in two auto accidents." WRITE:

1. A report of these accidents, inventing names and places.
2. A slanted report for a newspaper campaigning for stricter laws against juvenile delinquency. (Be sure

to use factual statements only, letting your reader make his own inferences and judgments.)

3. A slanted report for a newspaper highly critical of the local administration. (Again, use factual statements only.)

……

ASSIGNMENT: The Dave Williams family live in a progressive neighborhood...."suburbia"....in a Northern California community. They have taken a weekend trip, forgetting to turn off the sprinklers in the front yard. It had been an extremely dry summer and fall, requiring water rationing and scheduling. Luckily, their good friend and neighbor, Horace Windfell, discovered the error and turned them off on Saturday.

When Mr. Williams returned on Sunday evening, he found three notes on the front door. YOU write these three messages:

1. A note from his friend Horace.
2. Even though Horace turned the water off on Saturday, Oscar B. Tidewater, president of the Water Conservation Committee, left his remarks.
3. Also included in this list of communiques was a note signed, Roscoe F. Clingington, Municipal Judge.

(Take time to assess who you are before you write each note. Keep each note short and to the point.)

(9)

DESCRIPTION OF A PERSON

APPROACH: Choose one student to stand before the class. Each student is to write one sentence describing the model.

The teacher may say, "In this one sentence use an IMAGE of this model's hair, clothes or movement. Try for only ONE significant IMAGE." Then on to a longer, detailed writing or paragraph.

The teacher may ask:

1. In the first sentence of your description use one word that suggests Jim's personality...underline that one word.
2. In your 2nd and 3rd sentence, you need to suggest Jim's general appearance, his approximate age, height,and coloring. You may say, for example, "Jim is a tall, brown-faced boy of thirteen."
3. What colors bear out your impression of Jim?s personality? Be sure to name colors and kinds of clothes. Remember shoes, socks, shirt, tie, belt, trousers.
4. What movement bears out your impresiion of Jim? What about his posture, his hands, the tilt of his head?
5. Now come to the face, the hair, the eyes. Name colors. Show how these things reveal Jim's personality.
6. What one thing (movements, hands, shoes, sweater, tie, ring) is MOST significant in revealing Jim's personality? Put

this description last in your creative composition.

(10)

IDEA FOR EXPANDING IMAGES TO ACHIEVE GREATER ORIGINALITY

Put this word on the board: PAPER ASK: "What does this word make you see?" RESPONSES: whiteness...white linen paper...scented pink paper...white paper with blue edges and gold initials of L.G. in one corner.

Other image words can also be used to create a sense of visual perception.

(11)

MATERIALS PREPARED BY CREATIVE TEACHER FOR "EMERGENCY" DAY

Ingenious teacher could cut out a collection of interesting letters to the editor from popular magazines.

1. Teacher reads one letter aloud, without reading name of sender. Students attempt to diagnose the writer's motive for writing letter.
2. Students discuss writer's personality traits which might have led him to take such a stand.
3. Students can then write their own "letter to the Editor" using the same theme as some of the samples read by the teacher.
4. Excellent project to develop VOICE and AUDIENCE writing: Students can write a reply to a "letter to the Editor," stating their agreement or disagreement with the original argument of the letter.

(12)

NORTHWESTERN CURRICULUM - MRS. HANSEN'S TAFT HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT

Ten or twelve compositions on ONE subject could be duplicated and stapled together. Each student could receive this packet of creative compositions written by fellow students. Students spend time reading through compositions quietly, then the following guide questions could be asked:

1. Which composition is the most creative in your opinion? Why?
2. Which is outstanding in its use of strong words, especially verbs & nouns.
3. Copy down about 8 of the most graphic phrases from these writings.
4. Which compositions are written in 1st person, 3rd person?
5. Copy down cliches or phrases that are worn-out "padding."
6. Cite the transitional words or phrases used in each composition.
7. Cite metaphors and similes used.
8. Students could also re-write one sentence within a composition which is in need of strengthening the message.
9. Find 2nd level clauses (dependent clauses).

The suggestions above would certainly over-run a 45 min. period. Choices of the above can be made to fit the level of students.

(13)

SONG STUDY SHEETS

The following songs are suggested to be duplicated beforehand by the teacher. The playing and singing of the record could also accompany this study and also enliven its presentation:

1. BORN FREE: Creative discussion, followed by writing, of students' opinion of "freedom" as it is used within song lyrics and also as the word "freedom" is used in our society.
2. IMPOSSIBLE DREAM: Discussion or writing on "reaching goals" and also on the students' possibility of reaching their chosen goals.
3. PEOPLE: Our interdependence upon people could be examined through discussion or written work.
4. FOLK SONGS OF JOHNNY MANN: These songs are popular and well-enunciated. The individual historical background for some of the selections could be discussed, plus their message to society.

(14)

NORTHWESTERN CURRICULUM OBSERVATION LESSON:

This lesson should be used early in the students' writing experience but it can also be used sporadically to stimulate intensified observation of people and things.

The teacher shows the class a large, detailed picture, preferably a copy of a masterpiece. Students make 3 columns on their paper. As the teacher passes the students with the picture on the 1st observation, students jot down as many details of picture that they can recall from its viewing. The 2nd column is used to jot remembrances of detail found during the teacher's 2nd picture-showing. The 3rd column is used for the 3rd showing. This lesson greatly develops a sense of individualization in the observer. The 1st column usually includes OBSERVATIONS, 2nd column, CLASSIFICATIONS, while the last showing of the picture finds the students individualizing aspects of the picture in the greatest detail.